2011

Perceptions of Mentor Teachers in a Professional Development School

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PERCEPTIONS OF MENTOR TEACHERS IN A PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SCHOOL: A MIXED-METHODS STUDY

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE

FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

PROGRAM IN CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

BY

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CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

AUGUST 2011

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am very grateful to Dr. Dorothy Giroux, my advisor, for generously sharing her time, knowledge and expertise to walk me through this defining academic experience. Your kindness, gentleness, patience and relentless support inspire me immensely.

To my committee members, Dr. Ernestine Riggs and Dr. R. James Breunlin, thank you for taking time to meet with me personally, reading my writings and offering valuable advice on various issues regarding this research study.

A vote of thanks to the teachers, site coordinator and the principal at Twinsdale PDS, for all the assistance rendered in completing this study. To all teachers who have contributed building blocks to my academic achievements, I treasure your counsel. I promise to carry on the torch and be a beacon of hope for learners that will cross my path.

I am indebted to all my benefactors for offering me the golden opportunity to pursue academic dreams that would have been impossible to obtain without their financial support. Special thanks to Fr. Gabriel Besseteaux (RIP) of the White Fathers, for starting me off grade school onto college; Fred and Flora Montagnani of Mundelein, Illinois, for my second graduate degree; and Charles and Irene Brewick of La Grange Park, Illinois, for allocating a special education fund for my family. It is impossible to mention every one of my benefactors by name in this script, but God bless you all abundantly for your generosity. To my dear brother, Fr. Pontian Kaweesa, this would not have been possible without you. Thank you for holding my hand and leading me in the

right direction while supporting my achievements every step of the way. There isn't a finer brother!

To all my friends and family here in the USA and back home in Uganda, thank you for your words of encouragement and expressions of relentless support. Thank you for urging me on towards completion.

DEDICATION

For my dear parents, Edward and Magdalene Ssenoga, who believed in me from the very beginning, and propelled me on to greater heights even when those heights seemed unreachable for the kind of people we were. I love you infinitely.

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ABSTRACT

The professional development school (PDS) is an innovative teacher education program, designed to foster simultaneous teacher and student development in K-12 schools and teacher training institutions. Built as a partnership between professional education institutions and K-12 schools, the program aims at preparing new teachers, promoting the professional development of practicing teachers, and improving student performance through the application of inquiry-based practices. This study examined the perceptions of mentor teachers regarding the contribution of a PDS to teacher development. The participants were mentor teachers, in an urban elementary PDS, teaching at different grade levels, with mentoring experiences ranging from one to more than five years. Data were collected using an online survey questionnaire and interviews. These data were analyzed to determine the perceptions of mentor teachers regarding mentoring strategies used to enhance teacher development, benefits obtained from working in a PDS, and support and guidance strategies used by the university to enhance the work of mentor teachers in a PDS. Results revealed that mentor teachers were willing and fully committed to promote the PDS partnership agenda. Mentor teachers perceived reflective teaching techniques and collaborative mentoring strategies to be very effective in promoting mutual teacher development. Perceived benefits included using the best teaching techniques to demonstrate teaching, applying reflective teaching techniques to improve practice and adapting new ways of teaching from the interns.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The Professional Development School Agenda

The professional development school (PDS) is a result of a reform movement with broad-based strategies that have transformed the way schools operate both at the elementary and secondary levels, and in teacher preparation programs. PDSs are partnerships formed between the university and elementary or secondary schools to work together to accomplish four goals. These goals are: 1) training new teachers in a realistic, active, school environment; 2) facilitating the professional development of in-service teachers; 3) promoting student performance; and 4) engaging in research to enrich teaching practice (Abdal-Haqq, 1998; Teitel, 2001). The National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE, 2001) refers to PDSs as real schools that have been redesigned and restructured, to serve a complex mission of promoting a learning environment that supports professional development, and student learning using an inquiry-based approach to teaching.

The PDS grew out of the effort to coordinate college of education agendas with schools they serve (NCATE, 2001). It is built on the premise that P-12 schools and teacher education institutions can work together to achieve mutual benefits, such as bridging the gap between research and practice, and providing a live context for modeling realistic teacher preparation practices. In the early days of PDS field testing, inquiry was

determined to be a very important process in the integration of professional and student learning in a PDS partnership, (Trachtman, 2007). Since then, engaging in PDS work means that partners and candidates engage in inquiry: to identify and meet students' learning needs; to support teacher candidate learning; and to determine and provide for the professional development agenda of practicing professionals. Inquiry based practice is a key element in the operation of the PDSs. In this respect, PDSs have been compared to teaching hospitals because they run on a curriculum developed out of students' learning needs just as hospitals let patients' medical needs determine the curriculum for medical students, residents and staff physicians in a teaching hospital (NCATE, 2001). PDS partners and teacher candidates make a commitment to use academic and practitioner knowledge to identify and meet students' diverse learning needs using inquiry based approaches.

The PDS is regulated by standards that were originally developed and field tested by 20 PDS partnerships selected to represent the diversity of participants and stages of development. The standards were developed to serve a number of purposes. Standards ensure that PDSs remain faithful to the purpose for which they were created, and pursue acceptable goals rigorously under a common identity. Standards serve as developmental guidelines for the PDS partnerships. Together with developmental guidelines, standards are used to assess the performance of the PDS partnership, and to provide feedback to participants. Standards help to define the agenda of the PDS partnership to policy makers and others who wish to support the partnership. Standards make it possible to conduct and evaluate research on PDS outcomes and to compare and contrast findings across

settings and among different studies. The National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education identified five standards: learning community; accountability and quality assurance; collaboration; equity and diversity; and structure, resources and roles (NCATE, 2001). Standards are the same for all partnerships at different stages of development and may be used as guidelines or measures of performance assessment. They were developed to suit single-school and multiple-school partnerships.

Over the years, a national association known as the National Association for Professional Development Schools (NAPDS) has developed with leadership that represents the educational continuum of membership schools. The association was officially launched in March 2005, and has the capacity to fund an annual conference, maintain a website, circulate a newsletter, and produce periodic research journals. What started as isolated practices of school-university partnerships has now developed into a coordinated whole, with guiding principles, mission statement and unified leadership. Membership grew from 800 PDS educators in 2002, to over 1,000 educators from more than 40 states and five countries under three years, and it is still growing (NAPDS, 2008). The PDS is credited for narrowing the gap between educational institutions, to the extent that those in higher institutions are able to work with those in elementary and secondary schools to improve the educational process. Members of the PDS who attend the annual national conferences show great appreciation for the opportunity to work on similar goals with others of similar interests, in “a near-equal balance of university and PreK-12 educators” (NAPDS, 2008).

The ultimate purpose of the PDS partnerships is to enable professionals in schools and universities to combine minds and resources and develop inquiry based practices. Researchers and policy makers have long advocated for the integration of research and practice as the basis for improving education at all levels (Burn, 2006; Siebert, 2005). In PDSs, teacher educators at the university level, contribute the theoretical and research component of teacher education, while in-service teachers in schools provide up-to-date practical aspects of teaching including provision of hands on practice for pre-service teachers. The PDS combines two important reform strategies: meeting student learning needs and promoting the professional development of teachers using inquiry based practice. NCATE (2001) regards the "integration of professional and student learning through inquiry" (p. 4) one of the ten key concepts that are reflected in the content and structure of the PDS standards. PDSs have a mission to simultaneously renew schools and teacher education programs through the combined efforts of college educators and school practitioners. This spells dynamic changes for all parties involved, and redefines the way teachers perform their job. Changes are particularly significant for teachers in K-12 who take part in mentoring pre-service teachers. In addition to their chronically heavy schedules, mentor teachers shoulder the responsibility of guiding, directing and supervising at least one pre-service teacher for a year. According to Scheetz, Smeaton, Waters and Lare (2005), mentor teachers spend two to three days a week, in the first half of the year, helping pre-service teachers to engage in pre-student teaching activities, and an entire semester during the second half of the year, helping pre-service teachers to gradually take on full time teaching. In some cases, mentor teachers teach seminar

courses to pre-service teachers at the PDS site. These changes are not only dictating revised classroom routines on a school wide basis, but require different mindsets from teachers, administrators and students in a PDS.

The success of a PDS depends to a large extent on the collaborative efforts of partners both in schools and universities, including teacher candidates, to build a learning environment that integrates professional and student learning through inquiry. This, as the NCATE (2001) pointed out, means that partners make student learning a top priority, and commit group effort, time and resources, to identifying and meeting students' learning needs. The PDS is considered by the NCATE to be well designed to handle teacher learning which is best achieved in the live context of teaching practice. As the NCATE explained, universities teach candidates about teaching and what to teach, while PDSs facilitate learning which is best achieved by doing.

Statement of the Problem

A large portion of research on PDSs describes the growth in popularity and influence of the PDS in schools and universities (Abdal-Haqq, 1998; Teitel, 1997; Teitel, 2001). Research studies have particularly explored the changes in teacher education programs resulting from the collaboration between universities and schools. The PDS has specifically made an impact on the way new teachers are prepared, by enriching pre-service teacher programs beyond the traditionally prescribed standards. Teacher candidates in PDSs are exposed to extensive, well-structured field experiences (Conaway & Mitchell, 2004). They work in real school environments, over a period of one year, dealing with diverse students and observing/implementing authentic learning classrooms,

(Darling-Hammond, 2000). They receive frequent, quality supervision and feedback from well-trained, experienced in-service teachers, (Rodgers & Keil, 2007). They encounter rigorous assessment strategies, including portfolios and realistically lengthened student teaching experiences (Castle, Fox & Sounder, 2006). They work collaboratively under more supportive, reflective and empowering conditions (Mebane & Galassi, 2001; Rodgers & Keil, 2007; Schneider, Seidman & Cannone 1994; Voltz, 2001). They have better chances of integrating research and practice because their teacher learning experiences are collaboratively designed by researchers at the university and practice-oriented cooperating teachers. In addition, PDS teacher candidates take some theory courses at the PDS site during their student teaching experience, making it possible to integrate theory and practice easily (Burn, 2006; Siebert, 2005). Furthermore, PDSs provide a collaborative work environment that supports communal learning (Mebane & Galassi, 2001; Rodgers & Keil, 2007), and act as a mediating force between university and schools, enabling the integration of research and practice (Burn, 2006; Siebert, 2005). Most of these changes are yielding desirable outcomes for the teaching profession. For instance, teacher candidates from PDSs tend to join teaching in large numbers, and to persist longer than those from traditional teacher education programs (Latham & Vogt, 2007); they graduate with better teaching experience and are rated at the level of second year teachers (Castle et al., 2006). These changes are worthy pursuing, and critical to building effective schools.

An equally important aspect of the PDS that has not been fully explored in research studies is the professional development of in-service teachers. Although PDSs

are based on standards that support the simultaneous development of pre-service and in-service teachers, current studies reveal that the development of in-service teachers has not been as strongly advocated for as that of pre-service teachers (Cooner & Tochterman, 2004). Rather, research studies tend to focus on the new roles and increased responsibilities in-service teachers play in the PDS other than the beneficial elements of the partnership to the mentor teachers. Much as identifying roles and responsibilities of mentor teachers is important for the smooth operation of a PDS, determining and specifying benefits to mentor teachers is necessary for mobilizing the commitment and support needed to achieve PDS goals. A few studies that explored benefits to mentor teachers in a PDS found that teachers demonstrate improved performance due to a desire to model the very best for teacher candidates; have a chance to learn and grow together with fellow mentors; receive concrete inducements such as time off; learn to use new teaching strategies from teacher candidates; get exposed to the latest educational research and reflect on their own practice by analyzing ineffective teaching techniques (Scheetz et al., 2005; Silva & Dana, 2001; Ross, 2003). These benefits are however not universally experienced by all in the PDS. Given that PDSs differ in composition, management, size, context, and level of development, it is necessary to study each partnership separately to determine benefits to various participants. Just because mentoring offers professional development benefits to mentor teachers, does not necessarily mean that mentor teachers are achieving the intended benefits. Therefore, there is need to find out if mentor teachers in a given PDS are benefiting from the process.

The lack of emphasis on in-service teacher development is especially evident in the way partnerships fail to specify or guarantee benefits for mentor teachers. The rigorous planning and measurement strategies that define teacher preparation programs for new teachers are not equally applied to ensure in-service teacher development. Yet, being an effective mentor is a demanding venture that means more than the application of best practices. It requires patience, hard work, time sacrifice, frequent updating of teaching knowledge and skills, and constant adjustment of work schedules. Scheetz et al. (2005) explained that mentor teachers need to show patience when explaining the school culture and procedures; sacrifice chunks of time to offer endless feedback; and relocate a significant part of their teaching assignments for the year. The need to specify benefits becomes more apparent given the fact that not all mentor teachers freely choose to participate in a PDS partnership. Cases exist in which administrators, usually, the school principals, use their mandatory power to gain support for their PDS agendas. In her analysis of 20 case studies about the collaborative process in PDSs, Rice (2002) described how unwillingness to participate makes PDS work hard to sustain. She explained that unwillingness to participate was common when individual teachers were forced to participate in a PDS. University and school faculty showed their unwillingness to participate by hanging on to their traditional roles; refusing to collaborate in the PDS processes. Ideally, teachers ought to be a strong initiating force behind PDS work, so that they can own the process and give total commitment to the achievement of PDS goals. One way of making this happen is to determine teacher benefits ahead of time, and work towards achieving them.

Mentor teachers need support and guidance to perform competently and effectively the multiple roles and responsibilities assigned to them in a PDS. Support for mentor teachers is particularly critical because they take on extra duties in addition to their already loaded schedules, and assume new roles that have to be learned before they can be performed effectively. The question of how well a PDS is preparing and benefiting teachers is as urgent as the question of how much student learning is taking place in the PDS. Fortunately, mentor teachers are capable of articulating the kind of help needed to boost their performance. In a study by Cornell (2003) mentor teachers were concerned about lack of support from the university; excessive workloads and time constraints; confusion over university roles vs. mentor teacher roles; and inadequate orientation, preparation, materials and guidance to act as a mentor teacher. The effectiveness of a PDS is dependent on a school's ability to address the concerns of mentor teachers. Actually, one of the PDS standards, *Accountability and Quality Assurance* (NCATE, 2001) is designed to guide partners to focus on increasing learning for all. By this standard, PDSs examine questions about learning presented by P-12 students, teacher candidates, faculty, and practicing teachers to engage in a continuous process of assessment, reflection and improvement of the teaching and learning process for all members. Given the major role mentor teachers play in the operation and sustenance of the PDS, their needs and benefits ought to be analyzed separately from those of other members, so that they can be attended to in a more serious and effective manner.

The need to determine benefits for mentor teachers in a PDS and to offer support to this group of practitioners cannot be overemphasized. As PDSs grow in influence and popularity (Abdal-Haqq, 1998; Teitel, 2000), more and more teachers in cooperating schools are taking on new roles other than those traditionally prescribed for their positions. Some teach college courses, grade student teachers' work (Rodgers & Keil 2007; Teitel 1997), and offer counseling and emotional support to teacher candidates. It is important that roles and responsibilities are not emphasized over and above benefits to mentor teachers. Teacher development is equally as important a goal of a PDS as student learning. Moreover, the success of a PDS depends heavily on the ability and willingness of in-service teachers to participate in the process, and the capacity of the partnership to promote their professional development (Cornell, 2003). It is crucial that each PDS lays a foundation for meeting the needs of in-service teachers, offer support, and encourage them to participate whole-heartedly.

This study analyzed the perceptions of mentor teachers in an urban elementary PDS regarding mentoring strategies used to promote mutual professional development for mentors and interns in PDS; benefits mentors obtain from participating in PDS; and level of support and guidance mentors receive from the university to help them fulfill their mentoring role. This study followed recommendations by Teitel (2001) that PDSs be studied on a case by case basis, using multiple measures, to avoid measurement problems that characterize the assessment of PDSs. In this study, quantitative and qualitative data were collected from mentor teachers using interviews and a survey questionnaire. The data were used to describe the perceptions of mentor teachers regarding the effectiveness

of mentoring strategies used in a PDS to promote mutual teacher development; benefits obtained by mentor teachers in a PDS; and level of support and guidance extended by the university to mentor teachers to enhance their work.

Research Questions

1. What mentoring strategies are perceived by mentors as effectively producing mutual benefits for mentor teachers and student teachers in a PDS?
2. What professional benefits do mentor teachers perceive as resulting from working in a PDS?
3. What is the perceived level of support and guidance for mentor teachers in a PDS?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this concurrent mixed methods study was to better understand the contribution of a PDS to teacher development by converging quantitative and qualitative data. Quantitative data were collected using an online survey questionnaire with Likert-like scale questions. These data were used to analyze the perceptions of mentor teachers regarding mentoring strategies used to promote mutual teacher development, benefits obtained by mentor teachers, and guidance and support strategies used by the university to enhance mentoring work in a PDS. Eight mentor teachers at Twinsdale PDS responded to the survey questionnaire. Qualitative data were collected using one-on-one interviews with three mentor teachers. These data were used to expand on survey results and develop detailed explanations of teachers' perceptions of the contribution of a PDS to teacher development.

Definition of Terms

Mentor teacher. Using Cornell's (2003) definition, a mentor teacher is "an experienced classroom teacher who accepts in his/her classroom a pre-service teacher in training" (p. 402). In the PDS, mentor teachers work with pre-service teachers for a period of one year, following a regular school schedule, to develop teaching skills that require practice by doing. Mentor teachers help pre-service teachers to learn school routines, to get acquainted with fellow teachers and administrators, to work on classroom related tasks with students, and eventually, to practice teaching independently and perform all tasks related to full time teaching.

The Professional Development School. A collaborative arrangement between a university and a school, usually a P-12 school, to work together in preparing beginning teachers, promoting professional development of in-service teachers, improving student learning, and engaging in research to inform educational policy and practice. A PDS may be a single-school or multiple-schools partnership. A single-school partnership is one formed between a university and a singe school, while a multiple- schools partnership is between a university and multiple schools.

Teacher Candidates/Interns/Student Teachers. These terms will be used interchangeably to refer to the same group of people. Teacher candidates are students undergoing training to become professional teachers. Student teachers or interns are in the final semester of their training. They engage in the actual teaching of students, under the supervision of qualified practitioners. The process is referred to as student teaching, and it marks the final stage of the transition from student to qualified teacher.

Pre-service Teachers. These are teacher candidates in training who have not been assigned any official teaching duties. The term helps to differentiate between teachers with official duties in the school, and those who may perform actual teaching tasks for training purposes.

In-service Teachers. These are fully qualified K-12 teachers with the official and legal responsibility to manage classroom work and other school related duties for a specified number of students. In-service teachers who share their classrooms with pre-service teachers to guide them in learning the teaching process and school routines are known as mentor teachers.

Mentees. The term is used in this study to refer to teacher candidates/interns working under the supervision and guidance of qualified teachers within a school environment. These are the individuals being mentored.

Delimitations and Limitations of the Study

The results of this study apply to the studied institution only, and cannot be generalized to a larger population. The study involved a small sample of participants at a single PDS.

The study did not use random sampling. Although, there were very few participants to choose from, the qualitative part of this study validated findings from the quantitative part by providing detailed explanations of teachers' perceptions of the PDS experience.

The timing for conducting this study was not favorable. It took place in May; a period when teachers are most likely to be very busy with testing, assessments, parents'

concerns and other end of school-year agendas. This may have reduced response rates for both the survey and interviews.

The list of variables that were included in the Likert-scale type questions was not exhaustive. It is possible that teachers perceived other unlisted variables as effective mentoring strategies, benefits from mentoring and guidance and support strategies.

Study participants' interview responses may have been influenced by the researcher's interview skills.

Results of this study reflect the perceptions of teachers at the studied PDS and may not be generalized to other teachers or other locations.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Many people believe that anyone who has sufficient knowledge of a subject can teach it well (Darling-Hammond, 2000). This belief contradicts what research and practice reveals about teaching, that teacher education is important (Darling-Hammond, 2000). Teacher education has been found to contribute to change in teacher beliefs about teaching and learning and to enable prospective teachers to develop teaching repertoires (Doppen, 2007). It is a means of developing teachers' critical thinking skills (Ostorga, 2006). Edwards, Carr and Siegel (2006) pointed out the need to expose teacher candidates to intensive preparation to enable them to work effectively with diverse learners in schools. Darling-Hammond (2000) explains that teacher education and licensing even in its current flawed state is better than little or no preparation at all. She argues that the acquisition of subject matter knowledge is very crucial to the formation of teachers, but it needs to be supplemented by pedagogical strategies relevant to teaching a given subject to a particular kind of learner. Darling-Hammond asserts that now more than ever, teachers need to be prepared to present subject matter in a variety of flexible and attractive ways suitable for handling an increasingly diversified group of learners with diversified learning needs and backgrounds. Boe, Shin and Cook (2007) express similar convictions that extensive preparation in pedagogy and teaching practice is more effective than some or no preparation, in producing teachers who confidently accomplish

field assignments, and feel well prepared to teach subject matter using appropriate pedagogical strategies.

Teacher education graduates, when asked about their training experience, expressed strong positive levels of satisfaction with the preparation in content area, instructional technology, and creating a learner centered environment (Bratlien & McGuire, 2002). Moreover, teachers who receive less or no training report being highly dissatisfied with their training, and encounter greater difficulty in fulfilling their teaching duties, especially if their assignments involve handling learners with extraordinary learning needs (Darling-Hammond, 2000). Because teacher education is important in the formation of teachers, it is necessary to examine the preparation process to identify elements that are crucial to the making of a competent teaching force.

Teacher Preparation Programs

Growth in technology in the 1950's supported the close observation and recording of teachers, leading to the growth in scope and magnitude of research on teaching and teacher education (Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2005). In a review of research on teacher education spanning a period of 50 years, 1950 to 2000, Cochran-Smith and Fries found that the problem of teacher education has been constructed and studied in three distinct ways: 1) as a training problem, whereby the focus was to ensure that teachers developed and exhibited behaviors proven as effective in raising student scores; 2) as a learning problem, with focus on examining the knowledge, skills, attitudes and beliefs teachers brought with them, and learned in formal teacher preparation programs and how they interpreted their teacher training experiences; and 3) as a policy problem, with focus on

developing and implementing policies and practices in teacher education that are empirically proven to link teacher preparation to desirable outcomes. These approaches though not exclusively independent of each other, alternately dominated educational matters historically, and significantly influence current lines of research on teacher education and the positions held by contemporary critics of teacher education programs.

A second dominant character of the history of teacher education between the late 1950s and the early 2000 is a recurrence of similar patterns (Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2005). Firstly, events and reports indicated that schools were performing poorly because teachers were failing. Secondly, teacher preparation was blamed for failing to meet teacher preparation standards. Thirdly, calls were issued for reforming schools through better teacher preparation programs and improved research. Finally, many initiatives were developed and implemented regardless of whether they were research based, had lasting value, or sufficient funding. Cochran-Smith and Fries explained that these patterns of research on teacher education were not linearly experienced as described, but help to explain why there are differing conclusions about teacher education research. Different conclusions do not necessarily symbolize being right or wrong about teacher education research. They are unique perspectives on three important aspects that affect our understanding of teacher education issues: 1) The place of research on teacher education in a larger historical and political context of the time period being studied; 2) the definition of “the problem” of teacher education; and 3) the choice of methodological approaches to study teacher education to solve the problem of teacher education. By “the problem” of teacher education Cochran-Smith and Fries meant “the problem to be

addressed by a particular study, including the issues, questions, and conditions that define a topic of concern to the educational community" (p. 72).

There were advantages and disadvantages associated with each of the three approaches to constructing and studying the problem of teacher education. In studying the problem of teacher education as a training problem, researchers overemphasized teacher outcomes over and above student outcomes. Moreover, researchers did not empirically establish the relationship between teacher behavior and improvement in student achievement. The relationship was merely assumed to result from teachers' behavior. In constructing and studying the problem of teacher education as a learning problem, researchers addressed questions that had little implication for policy development and failed to build a connection between teacher learning and pupil achievement. The drawback in the construction and studying of the problem of teacher education as a policy problem was lack of sufficient empirical evidence to select parameters of teacher education policy, e.g., certification requirements, entry routes, that may be manipulated by state, federal and institutional policymakers to bring about desirable outcomes, particularly, improvement of student test scores. Despite these limitations, Cochran-Smith and Fries (2005) expressed optimism that studies linking the three approaches to defining and studying the problem of teacher education are a worthwhile pursuit.

A different approach to analyzing teacher education programs was described by Zeichner and Conklin (2005) as consisting of a comparison of different teacher education programs using their general labels. The commonest means of distinction has been

reference to the structure of programs. As such, programs have been identified basing on their length, as in four- or five-year programs; by the level at which they are offered as in undergraduate, graduate or postgraduate programs, and by the institutions that sponsor them, as in college or school district programs. Other means of distinction are admission requirements and curricular emphases, conceptual orientations of programs, presence of connected themes that combine various courses or other particular features such as student cohort groups. The categorization of teacher education program by structural characteristics has made the greatest impact on teacher education programs. As Zeichner and Conklin found out, most teacher education reforms are discussions of the impact of teacher education structural characteristics on various teacher education outcomes.

Distinguishing teacher education programs by structural characteristics continues to be a common characteristic of analyzing teacher education programs today, especially in research studies that compare one form of program to another (Sindelar, Daunic & Rennells, 2004; Zientek, 2007). Ziechner and Conklin (2005) explained why it is not plausible to use structural characteristics alone to debate the worth or strength of teacher preparation programs. Programs vary so much within a single model that different definitions are needed to capture the substance of each program within a given policy context. Zientek (2007) found out that the difference between programs makes it difficult to determine the role certification route play in preparing teachers. In Zientek's study, an analysis of four traditional teacher certification programs revealed statistically significant differences on promoting student learning, understanding learners and overall preparedness. Even programs that acquire national significance such as "Teach for

America" or the Professional Development School program cannot be generalized across the board. This makes comparison within the model or across models very difficult. Zeichner and Conklin (2005) further explained that naming of program structures is problematic because a program described and implemented by teacher educators, may be different from the one experienced by teacher education students. Given the fact that structural elements do not reliably characterize teacher education program, Zeichner and Conklin recommended that teacher preparation programs be examined from the perspectives of the individuals who experience them.

A major advantage of analyzing teacher preparation programs through the lenses of those who experience them is the chance to examine programs in terms of their components. Some of the common components of teacher preparation programs include subject matter, pedagogical skills, field experiences, courses in general education and education foundation courses (Boe et al., 2007). Floden and Meniketti (2005) reviewed research that examined the impact of subject matter courses, general education coursework in arts and science, and coursework in the foundations of education on prospective teachers' knowledge. Results of most studies were inconclusive with the exception of studies in mathematics subject matter that was found to have a positive impact on the teaching of secondary mathematics. Floden and Meniketti noted that difficulties of measuring the impact teacher education has on student achievement, and of measuring teacher learning, pose challenges in determining the impact of coursework on teachers' knowledge. They were hopeful that understanding the contributions of mathematics subject matter study to teaching, opens a way to investing in research work

that will build a better understanding of contributions of other types of coursework to teacher knowledge.

Variations in components of teacher preparation programs may be a factor influencing the performances of teachers graduating by different certification routes. Zientek (2007) argued that program components are crucial in determining the impact teacher training makes on producing quality teachers. Zientek examined the role played by the certification route in producing high quality teachers, and found that variation between preparation programs influenced teachers' perception of overall preparedness, which in turn was affected by the components of the preparation programs they attended. Zientek found that programs were different within the same teacher preparation model, as in the traditional teacher certification programs, as well as across models. The differences between programs complicate the task of determining the role certification routes play in preparing high quality teachers. Another study by Justice, Greiner and Andersen (2003) found that inadequate training and lack of a student teaching component, negatively affected a program's contribution to teaching effectiveness.

A study by Doppen (2007) found that methods courses, field experiences and student teaching helped to change pre-service teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning social studies. Doppen conducted a case study involving 18 graduate students in an intensive secondary social studies teacher preparation program. Doppen used questionnaires, interviews and daily journals to collect data. The graduate students completed two questionnaires; one, at the beginning of the teacher preparation program and the other, at the end of the program, after the student teaching experience. The

students also kept daily journals during the student teaching process, to record their major daily experiences. Four purposefully selected students were also interviewed at the beginning of the program and at the end, after the student teaching experience, to obtain a more detailed and deeper description of the participants' beliefs and perceptions of their own experiences. Results showed that teacher preparation can have a favorable influence on the beliefs pre-service teachers hold about teaching and learning social studies. The context of field experiences and student teaching was very instrumental in determining the actual experiences student teachers chose to apply in their practice. In Doppen's case study, student teachers were favorably disposed to adopt student-centered approaches as part of their repertoire because the preparation program advocated for use of student-centered approaches to teach social studies.

Another study by Zientek (2007) found that student teaching and mentoring experience were influential processes of producing a high quality teaching force. The study consisted of 1,197 teachers within the first 3 years of their teaching. Of these, 415 obtained their teacher certificates through the traditional teacher certification (TTC) programs, while 782 obtained theirs through non-traditional teacher certification (NTC) programs. The participants answered a survey that consisted of three parts. Part I covered demographics, educational attainment, certification route, program characteristics and commitment to teach. Part II and III consisted of items evaluating self-efficacy, overall preparedness to teach, and teachers' perceptions of preparedness to teach. The items were rated on a 6-point interval scale, with 6 indicating the best prepared. Results showed that, traditionally prepared teachers felt better prepared than

non-traditionally prepared teachers in communicating, planning and using instructional technology however, a less positive mentoring experience had a negative effect on their overall perception of preparedness. Alternatively, positive mentoring experience and prior classroom experience positively influenced non-traditionally certified teachers' perceptions of preparedness. For all teachers in Zientek's study, teacher efficacy and the ability to understand learners were strongly related to student teaching and mentoring experience.

Research shows that most teacher preparation programs are not equipping teacher candidates with skills to teach diverse students. In Zientek's (2007) study, novice teachers did not feel well prepared to handle matters related to a multicultural curriculum, or to assess student's learning. In Edwards et al.'s (2006) study, more than 40% of the 17 teacher candidates from a traditional teacher preparation program admitted to have received training through university coursework, and workshops on using differentiated instruction. Of the 38 practicing teachers in the second group of participants, more than 50% reported that they received training in differentiated instruction through workshops and reading. Only, 15% of this group, reported to have received training in differentiated instruction through university courses. These results show that the university is not giving priority to preparing teachers in applying differentiated instruction.

Essentially, teacher preparation should help prospective teachers to examine their beliefs about teaching. Prospective teachers need opportunities to identify and develop beliefs and attitudes that are compatible with effective teaching, and to develop the ability to discard or change those beliefs that are not. This is what Ostorga (2006) referred to as

preparing teachers who are reflective practitioners. Ostorga argued that teachers should be guided to develop their critical thinking abilities so that they can reflect on their practice and make decisions based on sound reasoning. As Feiman-Nemser (2001) observed, prospective teachers, like all school goers, acquire views and beliefs about teaching during years of schooling, which are most influential in determining the kind of teachers they become. She explained that, preconceived images and beliefs are a form of lenses through which prospective teachers interpret the knowledge and experience they encounter. Unfortunately, such beliefs may limit a prospective teacher's ability to be open to change. The role of teacher education, therefore, is to help teachers sort through these preconceived images and beliefs, develop new ones and debate the practicality of those they encounter in the course of their training, and later in their professional practice. As in-service teachers continue to play an active and central role in the training of pre-service teachers, the question of teaching beliefs carries as much weight for the teacher trainees as it does for the mentor teachers. In-service teachers confess that it is very hard to give up their classrooms to teacher trainees. It is similarly difficult to trust a less experienced practitioner to try out new skills they have not practiced before, to a full classroom of vulnerable students. These are justifiable concerns for mentor teachers. Developing the reflective thought process of both pre-service and in-service teachers may help forge a way through resolving these and similar concerns about teaching.

Teacher preparation is particularly critical for teachers working with children in elementary and secondary grades and most especially, for children dwelling in impoverished neighborhoods. Darling-Hammond (2000) explained that the expectations

society places on teachers to educate diverse groups of students to higher standards, require teachers to undergo thorough and extensive training in being an effective teacher. In practice, new and in some cases, poorly equipped teachers are allocated to work in poor neighborhoods, where students are more diversified, and bring to schools a variety of psychological, emotional, economic and developmental problems (Justice et al., 2003). This is an unfortunate situation because students with greater learning problems need expert teachers. The pairing of the less qualified teacher with the needy students partly contributes to high teacher attrition. In Darling-Hammond's study (2000), teachers who felt poorly prepared after the first year of teaching, expressed the greatest desire to leave the profession.

Although there is a high regard for teacher qualifications and meeting of certification requirements, which are usually verified with various state testing programs, there is no guarantee that obtaining these credentials transforms one into an effective teacher practitioner. At most, these are labels indicating that someone has accomplished all recommended preparation to commence teaching. Practically, most teachers begin their teaching assignments feeling less equipped to encounter the numerous tasks and various issues that characterize the day-to-day management of schools. Feiman-Nemser (2001) argued that teacher education programs should aim at building a foundation upon which new, novice and even experienced teachers are prepared to learn in and from their practice. This means that teacher education ought not to be considered a final experience, but an initiation of a teacher into a life-long learning tradition. In other words, teachers

need to know that there is always room for improvement. Mentoring is one of the processes that foster teacher improvement.

Mentoring

Mentoring is a process by which experienced practitioners in a given field share their expertise with less experienced practitioners using various methods, such as, demonstrating a skill, explaining a procedure, or simply monitoring the performance of a beginning practitioner to offer necessary guidance. Collins, Brown and Holum (1991) explained that traditional apprenticeship requires the expert to demonstrate the proper means of executing a task through modeling, scaffolding, fading and coaching. A participant in Shim and Roth's (2008) study reflected on the mentoring experience in the following words:

> One of the things I learned as I explored that field, and I am convinced is still very true, is that very often experts in whatever field it may be are quite unable to explain how they do their job, what it is exactly that they know, and what we learned in expert engineering systems over the years is that somebody has to be an outside observer watching that person do whatever it is that they're so good at and interrupting if necessary or at the end a particular period of activity say, "Alright, you did this, why? Why did you do it that way instead of some other way?" In working together, an expert observer, an interviewer, and a true expert can very frequently capture what neither one of them can do alone (p.18).

In other words, mentoring involves the presentation of basic elements of a practice by an experienced practitioner, and the elaboration of the meaning behind expert decisions and actions for the benefit of the trainee. The trainee observes the performance of the expert practitioner, asks questions for clarification, and engages in demonstrating similar skills in a supervised performance, for the purpose of gaining expertise in the same practice.

Mentoring is recommended as an important component of teacher effectiveness (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (NCTAF) (1996). It is specifically recommended for pre-service and new teachers to help them experience a smooth and gradual transition into teacher status and/or school environment. Anorld-Rogers, Arnett and Harris (2008) studied an induction program in the Lenoir City Elementary School System that was sponsored by Tennessee University to address the needs of novice and newly transferred teachers. They explained that mentoring provides additional support for developing teaching strategies and getting acquainted with school routines and requirements for new teachers fresh out of training, as well as veteran teachers who are new to a school system.

Arnold-Rogers et al.'s (2008) study consisted of 20 mentors and novice teachers, and used monthly meetings and a survey questionnaire to determine the effectiveness of a mentoring program during the initial implementation year, the quality of individual and group experiences for participants, and the areas of the program needing improvement. Results showed that both mentors and novice teachers found the mentoring program to be beneficial overall. The program encouraged the development of collegial relationships

through which mentors and novice teachers constructively and professionally tackled problems encountered in practice. Mentors strongly agreed (86%) that their suggestions received positive responses from novice teachers, while novice teachers positively agreed that mentor assistance and support were beneficial (82%) and faculty assistance and support were beneficial (64%). Participants regarded mentoring as a mechanism for mobilizing the faculty and school system's commitment in supporting teachers in their search for success in the classroom and professionally. Both mentors and novice teachers acknowledged a need to allocate more time for one-on-one meetings, planning, and guidance. About 57% of mentors indicated that an inadequate amount of time was allocated for mentoring duties, and 43% felt a need for clarification of responsibilities. Novice teachers had similar concerns, with 28% agreeing that time allocated for planning, networking and one-on-one guidance was inadequate, 28% expressed a need for additional professional development opportunities, and 9% wanted clearer communication of a novice teacher's responsibilities. Results of this study reflect that teachers have a clear sense of what they want from a mentoring program.

Similarly, Zientek (2007) found that mentoring has a strong overall influence on how new teachers perceive the effectiveness of the entire teacher preparation experience. Zientek carried out a study to determine the impact of teacher certification route on teachers' perceptions of preparedness, and the role played by program components, mentoring, and prior classroom experience in making teachers feel well prepared. The participants were 1,197 teachers from Texas in their first three years of teaching. Of these, 451 obtained their certification from traditional teacher certification programs, and

872 obtained theirs from non-traditional teacher certification programs, including university based post baccalaureate programs, school district programs, community college programs, for-profit agencies programs and a regional service center program. There were 610 teachers in the first year of teaching, 291 in the second year, and 296 in the third year. Zientek used surveys to collect data on teachers' perceptions of preparedness, self efficacy and mentoring experience. Results showed that traditionally certified teachers felt better prepared than non-traditionally certified teachers in using instructional strategies, communicating and planning. However, the differences in the overall perceptions of preparedness between the two groups were minimized by the quality of mentoring experiences encountered by the teachers. Teacher certification route accounted for 1% of the variance in teachers' self-efficacy; for about 2% of the variance in teachers' perceptions of preparedness to handle issues related to classroom teaching and student learning; and for about 1% of the variance in teachers' overall sense of preparedness. When mentoring and prior classroom experiences were taken into consideration as influential factors, teacher certification route accounted for 6% of the variance in teachers' perceptions of preparedness on classroom teaching and student learning issues, and for 4% of the variance in teachers' overall sense of preparedness. In Zientek's study, positive mentoring experiences and prior classroom experiences significantly improved the teachers' sense of overall preparedness to teach. This shows that mentoring and student teaching are very important processes of the teacher preparation programs.

Mentoring enables collegial relationships to develop among teachers. Collegial relationships enable teachers to engage in constructive conversations pertaining to instructional techniques, lesson plans, and student learning (Scheetz et al., 2005). Collegiality among mentor teachers often extends to student teachers, enabling them to share richer learning experiences with a larger community of collaborating mentors. A study by Rodgers and Keil (2007) examined the interaction between the student teachers and the cooperating teachers during the implementation of a restructured traditional student teacher supervision model at a PDS in the Midwestern region of the U.S.A. The study sought to encourage in-service teachers to "build relationships with pre-service teachers with the goal of integrating components of university initiatives and to enculturate teachers into a community that studies teaching and learning that make in-service teachers powerful allies in teacher preparation" (p. 64). In Rodgers and Keil's study the triad (university supervisor, cooperating teacher and student teacher) was replaced by paired dyads-mentor teachers collaborating with each other to discuss their mentees, and mentees collaborating with each other, thereby creating a larger learning community for all participants. In the study, the in-service teachers played dual roles as cooperating teachers and university supervisors. Together with the university program coordinators they implemented a restructured traditional student teacher supervision model, and participated in teaching courses to student teachers and assigning grades to them. Results showed that the restructured traditional supervision model effectively encouraged communicating between participants in a way that focused attention on issues for improving practice for both student teachers and practicing teachers.

The training of teacher mentors was found to increase benefits for prospective teachers. In a quasi-experimental study conducted by Giebelhaus and Bowman (2002), student teachers who were supervised by trained mentor teachers, developed more complete and effective planning, more effective classroom instruction and greater reflectivity on practice than student teachers who collaborated with mentor teachers whose training consisted of only orientation. The study consisted of 29 student teachers from two mid-western teacher education institutions. The students were randomly selected and randomly assigned for the student teaching experience to an experimental group of 14 mentor teachers and a control group of 15 mentor teachers. Mentor teachers in the experimental group received training in using Praxis III/Pathwise framework for assessment, roles, and responsibilities, while those in the control group received no training in the Pathwise framework. Mentor teachers in the control group used a traditional supervision approach. After controlling for pretest differences and group effects, results showed significant differences between the treatment and control group on 11 of the 19 discrete skills tested.

Although mentoring is designed to assist prospective teachers to develop teaching knowledge and to practice teaching skills under the guidance of experienced practitioners, research has found that teacher mentors tend to learn from the experience in varied ways. Hanson and Moir (2008) used surveys and personal interviews to track down the career path of a sample of 50 former mentors, who completed a full release mentoring program between 1994 and 2000 under the New Teacher Center Induction Model. The model released classroom teachers to perform full-time mentoring duties for

novice teachers for a period of three years. Hanson and Moir found that more than half of the former full time mentors had taken on leadership positions, to support other teachers or perform administrative duties at their local schools. Of the 50 teachers in the study, only about 34% of mentors returned to classroom teaching positions.

In practice, mentoring is not given sufficient attention when considering options to improve teacher quality. In Zientek's (2007) study, traditionally certified teachers received less than satisfactory mentoring from the teacher preparation program, and from the school district. This negatively affected their overall sense of preparedness to teach. The positive mentoring experiences of non-traditionally certified teachers boosted their sense of overall preparedness to teach, and minimized the differences in teachers perceptions of preparedness based on preparation route.

The active engagement of in-service teachers in the training of teacher candidates adds the context of reality to the teacher training process. This strategy combines the theoretical bases of education, provided through university coursework to the student teachers, with the practical aspects of the teaching profession, acquired through a guided student teaching experience in a live school environment. Involvement of practicing teachers is an effective way of addressing practitioners' complaints that university teacher educators have inadequate knowledge of the practical aspects of teaching, and as a result, fail to rigorously prepare prospective teachers to handle the daily routines of teaching (Feiman-Nemser, 2001). The involvement of practicing teachers exposes teacher candidates to current school affairs, and the latest means available for handling

them. This is particularly so in the PDS teacher preparation program where prospective teachers spend an entire school year engaged in the guided practice of teaching.

The PDS Teacher Preparation Program

The National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) defines PDSs as real schools that are restructured to support professional and student learning through the use of an inquiry-based approach to teaching (NCATE, 2001). Practically, a college of education institution enters into a collaborative relationship with one or more public schools to develop and implement programs that support pre-service and in-service teacher learning, student learning and inquiry-based teaching practice. Researchers often phrase the mission of PDSs into four parts: preparing new teachers, promoting the professional development of in-service teachers, improving student learning and bettering teaching practice through research and inquiry (Abdal-Haqq, 1998; Teitel, 2001).

The PDS has been a popular reform movement in the U.S. educational system for over 20 years (Abdal-Haqq, 1998; Holmes Group, 1995; Teitel, 2000). Since March 2005, members of the PDS are organized under an association known as the National Association for Professional Development Schools (NAPDS) which was set up to organize members, and cater exclusively to issues pertaining to the establishment, management and operation of the PDS. According to NAPDS website, a PDS is defined as a university-school partnership shaped by five philosophical bases and four logistical conditions that guide the decisions and activities of member institutions. The five philosophical bases include:

a) A comprehensive mission to promote equity within schools and the broader community.
b) A united commitment between schools and university to prepare educators through active engagement in the school community.
c) Need-based promotion of ongoing and complementary professional development for all participants.
d) A shared responsibility to participate in innovative and reflective teaching practice.
e) Engagement in deliberate investigation of practice and sharing of feedback to strengthen the work of the PDS.

The four logistical conditions are:

f) Formation of a relationship between a school(s) and a university based on a formalized agreement delineating the roles and responsibilities of all participants.
g) A flexible organizational structure "that allows all participants a forum for on-going governance, reflection and collaboration" (NAPDS, 2008).
h) Unrestricted sharing of formal roles among college faculty and P-12 faculty across institutional settings.
i) Use of formal rewards and recognition structures to promote dedication and sharing of resources for strengthening the work of the PDS.

The nine essentials were developed to provide distinction between the PDS and other models of school-university partnerships.

In a five-year study, involving three university sites, Teitel (1997) described conditions that are indicative of institutionalization of PDS networks. These include the capacity of an institution to continue PDS work beyond current leadership, changes in job descriptions to include the significance of PDS work, the establishment of support systems for college faculty involved in PDS work, provision for a working budget to support PDS work, and availability of literature on PDS to capture the interest of future students and practitioners. Other support systems for institutionalization of PDS work include the hiring of PDS graduates; gaining external recognition through involvement in a national conference or winning national awards; building alliances with strategic players such as school district personnel; and attending to organizational procedures and detail that encourage continuous collaboration among main players. On a national scale, the PDS has established a permanent presence, and locally, participating schools work towards achieving a similar status.

Collaboration is a key element in the success of the PDS. Partnerships between public schools and teacher education colleges capitalize on the collaborative efforts of college faculty who are well informed in educational theory and research, and public school teachers who have current knowledge and first-hand experience in the practice of teaching in an actual school context. In support of collaborative efforts in teacher training, Burn (2006) explained the crucial contribution of higher education to the PDS partnerships. Using a case study approach, Burn explored and evaluated the nature of the contribution of higher education to that of cooperating schools in the development of beginning teachers' skills and understanding. She used history as a curriculum area to

study “the selection and use of appropriate lesson activities” (p. 246) by university tutors and school mentors for the purpose of instructing beginning teachers. Data were collected from 18 taught sessions at the university using observation, tape-recording and artifacts of teaching materials. School-based data were collected over a 23 weeks period from four experienced history mentors, who tape-recorded a total of 50 weekly mentoring sessions. The results revealed that both tutors (college faculty) and mentors (public school teachers) placed high emphasis on pedagogical strategies and their intended purposes; student cognitive learning and achievement; and student ability as a single most influential element affecting the teaching situation. Burn explained that partnerships bring balance to the teacher preparation process. Tutors focused on student teachers’ learning whereas mentors concentrated on student learning. Furthermore, tutor recommendations were research based and encouraged student teachers to critically analyze research findings and other teaching recommendations before applying them. Mentors based their recommendations on their experience in the current schools where they were teaching and encouraged no criticism for their practice or recommendations.

In Mebane and Galassi’s (2001) study, 66 participants in a university and public school PDS partnership were surveyed to determine their degree of satisfaction with working in collaborative inquiry partnership groups at the end of their first-year of PDS participation. The participants identified benefits such as: opportunities to share information and ideas, learning new techniques, receiving constructive feedback, and working in a supportive atmosphere. Members of co-led groups showed more satisfaction with group leadership in the collaborative inquiry partnership groups than

those in singly-led groups. This emphasizes the unique contribution of collaboration to PDS experience. Even with numerous challenges associated with group size, time constraints, lack of leadership, unattainable goals and poor structure, levels of satisfaction appeared to outweigh levels of dissatisfaction in a PDS collaborative work environment.

In a related study, Melser, (2004) found that the majority of teachers expressed greater satisfaction with sharing the supervision of student teachers with a university faculty member. The shared supervision model increased opportunities to share feedback with student teachers, enabled the university liaison to assist in a variety of ways, and increase student teachers' awareness of the supervision process. In another study, Seed (2008) observed that creating and maintaining a collaborative work environment is a crucial condition for improving teaching. Reflection, empowerment and time were other important factors Seed mentioned as important for teacher development, and possible to develop under collaborative environment.

Mentoring plays a very important part in promoting the goals of a PDS. It is through mentoring that the PDS is able to pursue the simultaneous promotion of student learning and teacher development. However, the success of a mentoring process depends on striking a good match between the mentor and the mentee. A proper match is especially more critical in a PDS where mentors spend an entire year working with the same student teacher on all aspects of teaching, in and outside the classroom. A proper match-up between mentor and mentee requires organizers to go beyond academic interests and abilities, to personalities of individual participants. Scheezt et al. (2005) recalled a matching process that involved collecting autobiographical information from

student teachers through interviews and writing assignments, and passing this information on to PDS coordinators, who used background and personality traits to match up mentors and mentees.

The divide between universities and elementary schools though narrowed in a PDS environment is not entirely diminished. Difficulties may sometimes arise to hinder the progress of a PDS. A study by Cornell (2003) revealed that mentor teachers did not trust the university liaison to be knowledgeable about classroom processes. Yet, when the partnership works out right, participants on both sides stand to benefit considerably. Practicing teachers often work under tight schedules with little room and opportunities to catch up on the latest educational theories that enrich teaching practice. By working in a PDS, practicing teachers encounter opportunities for improving their knowledge and skills through interacting with university teacher educators to plan and implement teacher preparation programs (Melser, 2004). Some partnerships offer special roles and courses to practicing teachers when they participate in the training of new teachers. In a five-year follow up study involving three universities, Teitel (1997) reported changes in campus-based teacher preparation programs resulting from working with a PDS. The PDS philosophy enabled cooperating teachers to adapt new roles such as, teachers, co-teachers and guest speakers of campus based courses, thus extending the PDS influence to non-PDS student teachers as well. They also played an active role in giving feedback on college courses thereby shaping the overall teacher preparation experience. In turn, campus-based faculty members developed a new appreciation of the teaching profession through observing and working with cooperating teachers. They acquired insights in the

real world of teaching which in turn affected their focus on teaching. Thus, PDSs produce multiple effects among education institutions that choose to participate in the reform process.

The PDS program was found to graduate teachers with better integrated teaching skills, and advanced teaching experience than non-PDS programs. Intrigued by a high salary scale, equivalent to that of second-year teachers, paid to first-year PDS graduates, Castle et al. (2006) carried out a study to determine if PDS teacher graduates had "more experience" (p. 66) than non-PDS teacher graduates. The study consisted of 60 PDS teacher candidates and 31 non-PDS teacher candidates. Data were collected using student teaching evaluation forms, tape-records of student teaching portfolio presentations, notes on portfolios, and interviews with individual teacher candidates. Results showed that PDS teacher candidates scored higher than non-PDS candidates on teaching skills such as planning, instruction, management and assessment. They were student focused rather than self-focused. They showed a superior application and integration of INTASC standards, with a strong sense of ownership of their school and the teaching process. The researchers concluded that PDS teacher candidates show advanced developmental patterns at the time they are licensed, and are likely to be more successful at affecting student learning than 1st-year teachers from non-PDS.

In a related study Moyer and Husman (2006) found that pre-service teachers who completed their methods coursework and field placement in a PDS environment developed a better perception of their role as mathematics teachers than those who experienced a much shorter field placement and took their methods course work at the

college prior to beginning their student teaching experience. The participants were 47 pre-service, undergraduate, elementary school teachers who were enrolled in a mathematics methods course prior to a final internship placement for teacher certification. The pre-service teachers were randomly assigned to two groups for their methods courses. Group 1 consisted of 22 teachers who completed their methods courses in the traditional fashion, at the university campus, and were later placed in several neighboring elementary schools for student teaching experience on specified days of the week. Group 2 consisted of 25 students who were placed at a single elementary school site for their student teaching experience, and were to complete all their methods courses at the same site. Pre-service teachers in Group 2 spent four to five days a week at the school site, where they attended the methods courses, practiced teaching in their grade placements, and fully participated in the daily school activities as required. Both groups were taught by the same instructor, and had the same course assignments and same course content. Data were collected using pre-service teachers' written reflections on teaching of mathematics lessons, and instructor's notes of verbal communication between her and student teachers about mathematics lessons being taught at the school sites. A comparison of course documents, such as lesson plans, test scores on content and pedagogy, identified no differences between the two groups in their grades for the course. A review of the instructor's observation notes and students' written reflections revealed that the groups had differing perspectives regarding the purpose of their methods coursework assignments and field experiences. Pre-service teachers in Group 1 viewed their role as consisting of managing students' disruptive behavior, performing lesson

delivery as effectively as planned, and applying teaching principles provided in the textbook as specified. These pre-service teachers had problems connecting to the schools where they practiced teaching, and regarded their stay as a visit to the school. They were more concerned with performing the present required tasks other than preparing for the future goal of teaching elementary mathematics.

Pre-service teachers in Group 2 were more integrated in the school system and regarded themselves as "working in the school" (p. 46). They viewed their role as consisting of managing children's learning, carefully paying close attention to children's thinking and approaches to solving math problems. They regarded their role of teaching the lessons to be more than a present classroom performance, but a step towards their future goal of teaching children. Their self-evaluations were related to their ability to respond to children's learning needs. Pre-service teachers in Group 2 had a better grasp of their professional role as teachers instead of college students because of the opportunity to relate what they learned in methods coursework to problems encountered in student teaching experiences.

PDS create favorable conditions for coordinating research and practice. Failure to integrate research with practice is often identified as one of the main weaknesses of the teaching profession. PDSs have a high potential to unite educational researchers and practitioners in the education field. In fact, PDSs have been compared to teaching hospitals in reference to their capability of bringing the researchers and practitioners together similar to the way medical professions unite the same parties in the medical field. A study by Siebert (2005) described a PDS initiative in which researchers and

practitioners jointly developed curricula and field experiences that enabled student teachers to experience and practice translation of theory into practice. Eight student teachers in the PDS partnership completed a course for managing anti-social behavior. They learned about theory and research findings on managing anti-social behavior. They used what they learned in their classrooms and in so doing conducted their own research about the same problem. Siebert used student teachers' brief evaluations and reflective essays about the usefulness of the sessions, to evaluate the effects of the PDS initiatives on student teachers' ability to control anti-social behaviors in their classrooms. Results revealed that student teachers acquired research-based classroom management strategies that were directly applicable to real classroom contexts. In addition, most student teachers were surprised that they harbored misconceptions that hindered efforts to deter anti-social behaviors in the classrooms. They were also appreciative of the effectiveness of research-based strategies to address anti-social behaviors, and to keep them well informed of best strategies and their application. This study demonstrates how PDS initiative may be used to design curricula focused on addressing the most pressing needs of student teachers as they learn how to teach.

Collaboration does not happen automatically in a PDS, nor is it easy to achieve (Cornell, 2003; Scheetz et al., 2005). Mentors' experience may harbor outdated perspectives that are not aligned with this era of rapid technological and social changes. As Conners and Adamchak (2003) explain, autonomous teacher assumptions are flawed in the realities of current school practice. Popular educational strategies favor collaborative internships over training practices that encourage solitary teaching practice.

An isolated practitioner, managing a classroom independently most of the day, is no longer an attractive character. Today, educational challenges call for inclusion, diversification, differentiated instruction, use of paraprofessionals, and other related processes that are best addressed through coordinated planning and collaborative teaching. It is in this environment that practicing teachers are called upon to play an expanded role in training teacher candidates. The Association of Teacher Educators (1991) called upon cooperating teachers to be involved in selecting teacher candidates, designing professional development programs, and participating in research to broaden the knowledge base on teacher preparation. Mentor teachers need to be introduced to the new models of teaching and learning, as in "practices integrating technology with curriculum-based, student centered activities" (Grove, Strudler & Odell, 2004). The PDS sets the stage for helping mentor teachers realize this objective.

Rice (2002) who reviewed 20 case studies on the collaborative processes in PDS found that the ability of mentor teachers to develop relationships and communicate effectively was very important to the success of PDSs. But collaboration and effective communication are not easy goals to achieve in a PDS. Issues such as unwillingness to collaborate, prior relationships between university and school personnel, insufficient funding, lack of a formal structure to direct operations, power struggles between the university and the school, the level of commitment shown by the principal, miscommunication, among others, effect the success of a PDS. In a study by Beasley, Corbin, Feinman-Nemser, and Shank (1996), two elementary school teachers and a university teacher educator initiated a mentoring project that helped them appreciate

observation, writing, and practice center-talk as useful methods for promoting teacher learning.

Even teachers who are not specifically assigned supervisory duties in PDSs are positively inclined towards them. This was the case in a study by Voltz (2001) who interviewed 22 special education teachers at nine PDSs about the role they played in the preparation of general education teachers for inclusive classrooms. Although, special education teachers were assigned no formal role in the training of student teachers, they positively viewed the PDS experience as beneficial in promoting pre-service and in-service teacher development. The special educators in this study played a consultative role in the preparation of pre-service teachers by offering useful comments on how to handle special education students in inclusive classrooms. They also expressed the need to develop formal channels to teach pre-service teachers to work with special education teachers and students in a PDS context.

The style of mentoring in the PDSs may be a factor in the process to redesign education, and improve teacher quality, promote student learning, and use information technology to enrich policy and programs. The PDS embraces special areas of concern in its four-fold mission which include: 1) to engage in the clinical preparation of teacher candidates, 2) to promote the professional development of practicing teachers, 3) to conduct research for the purpose of improving teaching and learning, and 4) to enhance student learning, (Levine & Churins 1999; NCATE, 2001).

The Professional Development of Teachers

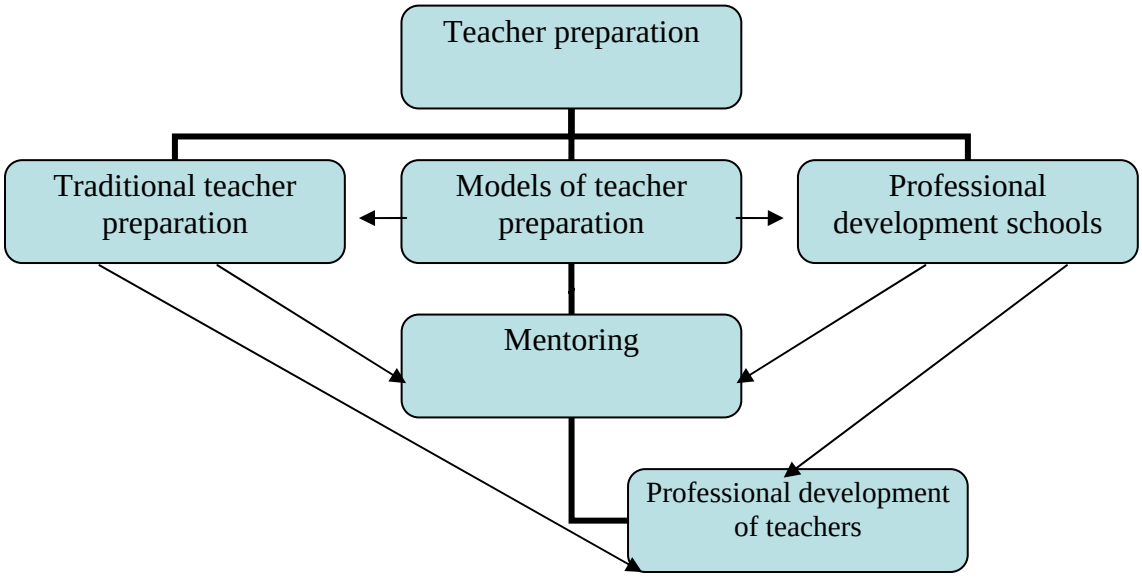
Much as initial teacher preparation is crucial for beginning teachers, it is not sufficient to cover each and every detail of scenarios a teacher is likely to meet in the course of a teaching career. Often new and/or complex situations arise that require teachers to consult others, for example, fellow teachers or experts, to devise effective solutions. Teachers benefit considerably when they participate as a group in professional development activities. Birman, Desimone, Porter and Garet (2000) regarded group participation to be one of the six effective characteristics of professional development. These researchers surveyed a nationally representative sample of over 1,000 teachers to determine characteristics of effective professional development. They determined that professional development activities are more effective if they last longer, are content focused, involve active learning opportunities, encourage collective participation and are coherent. They explained that collective participation in professional development that focuses on content knowledge encourages active learning and coherence, which in turn increases teachers' knowledge in their teaching fields, and leads to changed classroom practice.

For schools that are not able to join a PDS partnership, the alternative for promoting the professional development of practicing teachers lies in investing occasionally in courses and workshops that enable teachers to upgrade their teaching knowledge and skills. Such courses may be short term, or long term, or recurrent, depending on factors such as need for improvement, availability of funding, enthusiasm of participants and support from administrators. Desimone, Smith and Phillips (2007)

used a national sample of high school mathematics and science teachers from the *Schools and Staffing Survey* (SASS) to conduct a secondary analysis and determine the effect of policy in terms of authority, power, consistency and stability on teachers' decision to participate in professional development activities that improve teaching and learning. They measured principal and teacher self-reports of how state, district and school policies are put to work at the school and classroom levels. Results showed that, teachers who experienced authority, that is, the persuasive power of a policy, participated in professional development activities that are known to improve teaching and learning. Such activities were focused on subject matter content, instructional strategies, and collaborative interactions with other teachers on matters of curriculum and instruction. In addition, they found out that stability, which was measured in terms of reduced teacher turnover, was also associated with teachers getting engaged in effective professional development.

A quick scan of the topics of articles posted on the National Education Association website in 2008 provides a glimpse into issues that concern educators today. These include desegregated schools (January 31, 2008), decline in reading (February 11, 2008), using technology to motivate children to learn (February 29, 2008), preparing students for a global society (March 27, 2008), violence in schools (April 11, 2008), test-driven schools (April 30, 2008), increasing school attendance and preventing school dropout (May 29, 2008), teenage pregnancy (June 25, 2008), bridging the achievement gap (November 25, 2008), and say no to cuts in education (February 5, 2009). A review of goals set by the U. S. Department of Education for the fiscal year 2007-12 showed that

emphasis is to be placed on improving student performance, rewarding qualified teachers, renewing troubled schools to improve student performance in reading and math as stipulated in the No Child Left Behind Act, improving the academic performance of students in middle and high schools by offering rigorous and advanced coursework, improving access, affordability and accountability in colleges and universities for a competitive edge on a global scale. It is not easy to coordinate these multiple goals single handedly on a daily basis. This is why in addition to the recommended initial teacher preparation for beginning teachers, there should be multiple opportunities to enrich teachers with timely and relevant knowledge and skills for enhancing their practice. By Torff and Session's (2008) definition, a professional development initiative is a program of activities designed to enhance the professional knowledge of groups of teachers" (p. 124). Birman et al. (2000) consider professional development to play a major role in bridging the gap between teacher preparation and standard-based reform. The times and nature of problems in schools favor collaborative means of teacher improvement such as those promoted in a PDS setting. Such programs should capitalize on mentoring strategies that support mutual achievement of benefits for all school participants. Teachers who have experienced programs of this kind ought to tell their story to help explain benefits and areas that require improvement.



The interrelationship among literature review topics

Figure 1. Literature Review Topics

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Overview of the Study

The call to provide high quality teachers for all learners, at all grade levels stands a high chance of being met if schools and teacher training institutions commit to establish the PDS partnership, and work in unity to improve teacher and student performance. PDSs are partnerships between the university and elementary or secondary schools that commit to work together to promote four purposes: training of new teachers in a realistic, active, school environment; promoting the professional development of in-service teachers; improving student performance; and using research to enrich teaching practice, (NCATE, 2001; Teitel 2001; Trachtman, 2007). Research studies confirm that prospective teachers are benefiting considerably from working in the PDSs. They engage in realistic school based experiences, and a relatively longer internship process that enables them to get the valuable experience in vital areas such as managing the school curriculum, the assessment of students' learning needs and students' progress (Castle et al., 2006; Mebane & Galassi, 2001; Rodger & Kail, 2007).

The PDS movement is committed to building collaborative teaching strategies that focus on meeting student learning needs while supporting the professional development of practitioners, at the beginning and continuing stages. Cozza (2010) explains that in a PDS culture, all members are considered learners. She urges that the

PDS partnership boosts student learning in the classrooms by enabling teacher candidates to learn from practicing professionals; allowing veteran teachers to assume new roles, such as mentoring, that encourage reflective practice and contribute to professional development; and engaging university educators in joint research that improves practice.

Most studies on PDSs show that partnerships have positively impacted the professional development of prospective teachers beyond expectations of traditional teacher preparation programs. As Sherman (2005) notes, the traditional 8-12 weeks of student teaching experience does not offer enough opportunities for teacher trainees to practice and master the skills and strategies necessary to become successful teachers. Insufficient training, Sherman explains, makes it necessary to train teachers on the job which is a time consuming affair in terms of staff development and mentoring. Sherman describes how becoming a PDS enabled his school to accomplish two important goals: to participate in the developmental experience of new teachers and work together towards school improvement. He describes the PDS as a collaborative effort that enabled everyone to learn more about teaching and learning. Prospective teachers had more time for field experiences and were able to practice strategies and skills learned in the teacher training courses, the school faculty enjoyed opportunities to teach at the college level, and the college professors served as classroom teachers.

Ideally, PDSs are set up to support collaborative practices among professionals at different levels of expertise which improves practice at all levels. Most research studies on PDSs focus on benefits enjoyed by teacher trainees because these are generally anticipated and planned for from the outset. Moreover, many of the attractive features of

the PDS are designed to support the professional development of teacher trainees. For example, interns participate in lengthy internships that allow them to practice newly acquired knowledge and skills to near perfection (Castle et al., 2006). Unfortunately, the impact of the PDS on the professional development of in-service teachers has not generated the same level of interest and is not as largely researched as the impact on prospective teachers (Teitel, 2001). This study attempted to address this problem by inviting in-service teachers in one PDS to express their perceptions of the effectiveness of mentoring strategies used to ensure mutual benefits for interns and mentors in a PDS; benefits obtained by mentor teachers in a PDS; the level of support and guidance for mentor teachers in a PDS.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine the perceptions of mentor teachers regarding the effectiveness of mentoring strategies they use to promote mutual benefits for mentors and student teachers in a PDS; the benefits they obtain from working in a PDS; and the level of support and guidance extended to them by the university to help them fulfill their mentoring duties. The study collected data from mentor teachers in an urban elementary school that has been in a single-university, one-school partnership, for more than five years, with an area university in the mid-western region of USA.

The research data were used to describe mentoring strategies that mentors perceived effective in promoting mutual benefits for mentors and student teachers in the PDS; determine benefits that mentor teachers perceive to obtain from mentoring in a

PDS, and explain mentor teachers' perceptions of the level of support and guidance extended to them in the PDS.

Context of the Study

The study was conducted in an urban public elementary school located in the Midwestern region of the United States of America. The school, referred to in this study as Twinsdale (pseudonym) PDS is committed "to create a learning environment that embraces innovation and best practices for children, interns, and faculties in a diverse society" (The PDS Handbook, p. 2). Twinsdale PDS supports continuous improvement of learning for children, professional development of teachers, preparation of new teachers, and inquiry into the improvement of practice.

Twinsdale PDS is in partnership with a private, urban university within the same location. The university, which is referred to in this study as Teammate (pseudonym) University, offers an initial teacher preparation program at the undergraduate level, and collaborates with Twinsdale PDS in a single-university, one-school site partnership, (NCATE, 2001), to give teacher candidates a one year internship experience in a PDS environment. The partnership has been in existence since August 2005. Every year, Teammate University places 10 to 20 teacher candidates in Twinsdale PDS to complete their teacher training experience, working under the guidance of qualified practitioners.

The PDS year-long schedule (see Appendix D) is developed through the coordinated efforts of university faculty and mentoring teachers at Twinsdale PDS. The schedule consists of two main phases. The first phase occurs during the Fall semester, and is composed of 15 hours of coursework, and two 7-week placements for field

experience. In the Fall semester, student teachers move back and forth between university where they attend most college coursework, and the PDS, where they participate in field experiences and additional coursework related to their fieldwork. The two field placements enable teacher candidates/interns to work with a mentor at the lower grade level, K-4, for seven weeks, and at a higher grade level, 5-8, for an additional seven weeks. In the first phase, the student teachers meet with the mentor teachers to get acquainted with each other, and to develop a working plan for handling personal and professional affairs covering a wide range of issues including curriculum, assigning a workspace for a student teacher in the classroom, class schedules and procedures, making preparations for the first day of school, and exchange of personal information. In addition, the intern is responsible for observing lessons taught by the mentor and other qualified teachers, attending parents' conferences and staff meetings, and developing and submitting lesson plans to be taught later as the student teacher's comfort level increases. In short, the first phase, prepares interns to take on full time teaching in the second phase of the PDS year-long program.

The second phase of the PDS year-long schedule takes place in the Spring semester and is known as the student teaching phase. Student teachers take on full time teaching, managing classrooms independently, and performing a whole battery of teaching activities normally performed by fully qualified teachers. The student teaching phase lasts for 15 weeks. The interns spend the first few weeks observing mentor teachers, interacting with students in the classroom, developing lesson plans and practicing instructional and managerial techniques through teaching one to three lessons a

day. Eventually, interns plan and teach more lessons per day, until gradually they take on teaching for the entire day. The interns are prepared to work with students of all ability levels in all content areas during the period of the 15-week experience.

The PDS handbook is an additional source of reference for the PDS. The handbook specifies duties and responsibilities of mentor teachers, teacher candidates and university personnel; detailing procedures, timeline for completing projects, coursework loads, holidays of obligation, and other school processes relating to the operation of the PDS. The interns are expected to participate in university courses while completing the student teaching assignment. Mentor teachers are aware of this requirement, and are expected to assist teacher candidates to make appropriate plans to accomplish all course requirements, both at the university and the PDS site. The partnership between the university and the PDS is strengthened by the sharing of teaching duties. Two faculty members from the PDS site teach two of the required courses interns take in their final year of study.

Research Questions

The study used two sets of research questions to study the perceptions of mentor teachers in the PDS. The first set of questions was an online survey questionnaire that consisted of 54 questions. Seven of these questions collected demographic data and 47 were Likert-like scale questions. The survey was sent to all the 15 potential participants using a computer software program known as Opinio6. The second set of questions was the interview that consisted of five questions. The interview questions were designed to

encourage participants to give a detailed account of their experience in the PDS, and to expand on points developed in the survey questionnaire.

Research Questions for the Survey Questionnaire

1. What mentoring strategies are perceived by mentors as effectively producing mutual benefits for mentor teachers and interns in a PDS?
2. What professional benefits do mentor teachers perceive as resulting from working in a PDS?
3. What is the perceived level of support and guidance for mentor teachers in a PDS?

These three research questions represented three major sections of this research study.

1. Responses to question 1 showed the different mentoring strategies favored by mentor teachers in the PDS, and their perception of the effectiveness of these strategies in promoting mutual benefits for interns and mentor teachers.
2. Responses to question 2 were used to describe any professional development benefits that mentor teachers perceived as resulting from mentoring in a PDS.
3. Responses to question 3 described the extent to which mentor teachers felt supported and guided by the university to enable them to fulfill their mentoring duties.

Interview Research Questions

1. Why did you decide to become a PDS mentor teacher?
2. What have you gained professionally as a result of mentoring in a PDS?

3. Based on your experience, what mentoring strategies are most effective in promoting teacher development?
4. What guidance and support strategies are you finding most helpful in your work as a teacher mentor?
5. What would you suggest be done differently to make mentoring more beneficial?

The interview questions were developed to generate details on perceptions of mentor teachers using the experience and interpretations of a few selected individuals. Results from the interviews were used to validate responses from the survey questionnaire, and to provide detailed explanations of teachers' perceptions of the mentoring process in the PDS.

Selection of the Sample

The participants in this study were mentor teachers in an elementary public school located in an urban area, in the Midwestern region of the United States of America. The school, which is referred to as Twinsdale PDS in this study, consisted of 51 teachers. Fifteen of these were mentor teachers in the PDS, and were targeted for this study. The participants for the quantitative part of the study were drawn as a convenience sample (Creswell & Clark, 2007). This was because the number of potential participants was very small, and convenience sampling was the best way of ensuring that all willing participants were included in the study. Eight of the 15 mentor teachers responded to the on-line survey questionnaire. Responses from seven mentor teachers were included in the

analysis of this study, and one set of responses was excluded because the respondent skipped answering many of the questions.

All seven respondents were female elementary school teachers, with five or more years of teaching experience. They taught grade levels 1-3, 5-6 and 8. Three of the teachers had attended a PDS, and four did not. All respondents had been teaching in the PDS for five or more years. Three of the respondents had mentored in a PDS for more than five years, three had mentored for three years, and one had mentored for one year. Four of the participants had been mentors in a non-PDS, while three had never been mentors in a non-PDS.

All 15 mentor teachers received invitations requesting them to participate in the interviews. The original plan was to invite all teachers who had one or more years of mentoring experience to participate in the interviews, and then use purposeful sampling to select six of them to complete the interviews based on years of mentoring experience, or the performance of special duties. Four of the 15 teachers responded positively to invitations to participate in the interview, and returned signed consent forms. All four participants were female teachers, with five or more years of teaching experience. Three of the four mentor teachers who returned signed consents, took part in the interviews and provided data which were analyzed in the qualitative part of this study. The fourth teacher did not respond to follow ups to the returned signed consent. Thus, convenient sampling was used to select interview participants instead of purposeful sampling because less than six participants responded to the invitation to participate in the

interviews. All three willing participants had been mentors for five or more years, which gave them sufficient experience to be suitable interview participants.

The study targeted to interview two mentor teachers who performed special duties in the PDS. These were elementary school teachers who performed regular mentoring duties but with additional duties as instructors for university courses in the PDS. One of these teachers consented to participate in the study and became one of the three interview participants.

Measures and Procedures

A cross-sectional survey (Gay & Airasian, 2000) consisting of 54 questions, with 47 Likert-like scale measurements was developed and placed online using a computer software program called Opinio6. A list of names of the 15 mentor teachers was obtained from the PDS site-coordinator, and was matched up with school email accounts of individual teachers that were obtained from the school's website. All the 15 mentor teachers received invitations to participate in the survey, with a consent form (see Appendix F) and a link to the study via their school email accounts. Opening the link to the study was considered giving voluntary consent to participate. The surveys were administered electronically to all 15 mentor teachers, in May 2010, using email addresses from the school's website, and again in September, 2010, to seven of the 15 mentor teachers who did not respond the first time.

Because the month of May involves end of school-year closing activities, additional efforts were made to resend the survey to individuals who did not respond the first time. The survey was reopened and sent to seven mentor teachers who did not

respond the first time. It was resent on August 31 with the reminder date set for September 9, 2010 and the closing date set for September 15, 2010. This second effort produced no responses. The lack of response could have been a result of bad timing, given that schools are as busy at the beginning of the school year as they are at the end of it, or it could be that teachers had already made up their minds not to participate.

Instrumentation

Data were collected using two instruments, an on-line survey questionnaire and one-on-one audio-taped interviews. The survey questionnaire collected quantitative data from all willing participants. The interviews collected qualitative data from a smaller group of willing participants, three teachers, in this case.

Overview of the Survey Instrument

The survey questionnaire consisted of a total of 54 questions, 47 of which were Likert-scale type questions that assessed teachers on three different issues (see Appendix B). These were: i) mentoring strategies that promote mutual benefits for mentors and interns in a PDS, ii) benefits obtained by mentor teachers in a PDS, and iii) guidance and support strategies for mentors in a PDS. The statements were developed using recommended mentoring strategies availed to mentors in the PDS handbooks, results of previous informal teacher surveys administered by the university to assess the progress of the partnership, and points developed from the review of literature on PDSs.

The questionnaire was divided into four sections. Section 1 consisted of seven demographic questions that were used to obtain data on the personal and professional characteristics of the participants.

Section 2 to 4 consisted of 47 Likert-like scale questions that corresponded with the three research questions. Section 2 had 27 questions that described the various mentoring strategies that may be used in a PDS to support teacher development. The questions measured teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of mentoring strategies used to promote mutual benefits for mentors and interns in the PDS. Teachers responded by deciding if they had used a particular mentoring strategy, and indicating the extent to which they found such a mentoring strategy effective in promoting mutual benefits for themselves and the interns. The Likert-like scale measures for the mentoring strategies were numbered 1 through 4 as follows:

1: Never Tried

2: Not Effective

3: Moderately Effective

4: Very Effective

Section 3 of the survey questionnaire was made up of 12 questions that described the various professional development benefits associated with mentoring in a PDS. Teachers responded by showing their level of agreement with each statement to show if they perceive receiving the described benefit in their mentoring experience. The Likert-scale type measures for section 3 were numbered 1 through 4 as follows:

1: Strongly Disagree

2: Disagree

3: Agree

4: Strongly Agree

Section 4 of the survey questionnaire consisted of eight questions that measured teachers' perception of the level of support and guidance offered by the university to mentor teachers in the PDS. Mentors responded by indicating their level of agreement with each of the eight statements using a scale of 1 to 4, where:

1: Strongly Disagree

2: Disagree

3. Agree

4: Strongly Agree

Overview of the Interview Instrument

The interviews (see Appendix A) were conducted using five open ended, semi-structured questions. The questions were designed to encourage participants to expand on the responses given in the survey questionnaire and provide more details about teachers' experience in the PDS. Interview data added details to the research findings by allowing experienced individuals to describe their work, and its meaning, using their own terms, expressions and selection of relevant activities. All interviews were audio-taped and conducted by the researcher. Additional handwritten notes were taken by the researcher during the interviews, and added to the interview data to be analyzed.

The interviews were administered to three mentor teachers between May and August 2010. The meeting schedules and venues for the interviews were determined by the individual participants to encourage attendance and ensure maximum levels of convenience for all participants. Participants received verbal and written assurances that they will not be identified individually in the text. This was achieved by using

pseudonyms to code collected data; storing raw data under lock and key to ensure that they were accessible to the researcher only; storing codes, code breakers and raw data in separate places; and omitting from record details that identify individual participants. As an additional precaution, audio records will be erased at the completion of the study, and subsequent approval of the dissertation.

Data Analysis

Quantitative Data Analysis

Survey data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (Gay & Airasian, 2000). Raw data from the survey questionnaire were entered in an SPSS computer program to generate frequency tables and determine percentage rates of response for each or a combination of questions. Responses from the seven demographic questions were analyzed using written explanations, pie charts and graphs. The Likert-scale type questions were analyzed using frequency tables and percentage ratings for each question. Results from the various frequency tables were summarized using three separate tables that reflected responses to the three research questions posed for this study and corresponded with the three sections of the survey questionnaire. It was not practical to analyze responses of different subgroups in the sample, e.g., grade level taught, gender, years in teaching, because of the small number of participants.

Qualitative Data Analysis

Data from the interviews were transcribed in word documents and labeled with pseudonyms to differentiate among the three participants. The transcribed interview data were marked as follows: interview #1-Sarah Brown, interview #2-Tracey Nader, and

interview #3-Megan Peters. Transcribed data were matched up with field notes, dated and sequenced in a manageable form to facilitate analysis. Copies of transcripts and field notes were made for immediate use, while originals were stored in a safe place for clean, unmarked original data for future referencing. Transcripts for immediate use had extra large margins to provide ample space for noting main themes and other important characteristics when reading through the data. Data on computer files were similarly organized and copied for immediate use, with backup copies made for safe keeping of original data for future reference. Data were then analyzed using the four iterative steps described by Gay and Airasian (2000): reading/memoing, describing, classifying and interpreting.

Reading/memoing. This step consisted of a careful and extensive reading of the transcripts, field notes, and interviewer's reflections to get familiar with data, and identify outstanding phases that make up main themes (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Impressive sections of data were underlined to highlight important comments, and notes were written in the margins to keep track of first thoughts that had the potential to develop into main themes.

Describing. This step involved close examination of the data to generate detailed characterization of the setting, participants and activities. Descriptions established the context in which the study took place, the processes involved, the identity and actions of participants.

Classifying. This consisted of grouping chucks of data from field notes, transcripts and reflective comments into units that represent different aspects of the data.

Classifying involved forming categories of ideas that were comparable to each other, and determining the relationships among them. The interview questions were used as predefined codes (Miles & Huberman, 1994) that were used to code the formed categories. These codes included: professional development benefits from mentoring in PDS; mentoring strategies that promote teacher development; guidance and support strategies for mentor teachers; recommendations for change, and general issues. The code for general issues accommodated all sets of data that added meaning to the study but did not conform to the four-question related, predetermined codes.

Interpreting. This step involved selecting and reporting categories that best represented important meanings in the data. Identified categories of data were integrated and connected to the research topic to determine what was important in the data, why it was important, and what it meant to the participants and the studied context.

Merging of Data

Results from the quantitative part of the study were converged with results from the qualitative part during the interpretation phase (Creswell, 2003). This data triangulation technique was used to validate findings from quantitative and qualitative methods of data analysis. Themes that were generated from interviews were compared and contrasted to categories formed from survey data to determine areas of agreement. Interview data were searched for concrete examples of mentoring strategies that individual teachers found effective, evidence of professional development achievements, and for references to the support and guidance strategies that enable teachers to fulfill their work. Whereas quantitative data gave a general picture of what this PDS entails, the

interview data recounted the experience from the perspectives of a few experienced teacher mentors, thereby elaborating on findings from the quantitative portion of the study. Credibility was established by relating the findings of this study to results of other similar studies, and by explaining the meaning of discrepant data.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Overview and Purpose of the Study

The PDS has the promise and potential to enable educators to deal with various problems related to teacher training and the professional development of practicing teachers. In a PDS, schools and teacher training institutions establish a partnership that enables them to work together to train aspiring teachers in a realistic teaching and learning environment, over a period of one year. Such partnerships are credited with producing confident and effective teachers (Castle et al., 2006), reducing the drop out rate of new teachers from the teaching profession, allowing the integration of research and practice (Burn, 2006; Siebert, 2005), boosting the teaching experience of beginning teachers, promoting a collaborative work environment that supports communal learning (Cozza, 2010; Rodgers & Keil, 2007), among other benefits.

As PDSs grow in influence and popularity, it is imperative that their benefits are analyzed from all angles and for all parties involved in the process (Teitel, 2001). This is because PDS partnerships are founded on goals that support different but interrelated purposes. The partnerships are committed to achieving four purposes simultaneously. These purposes include: the training of new teachers in a realistic environment; promoting the professional development of mentor teachers, improving student learning, and using research to support teaching practice (NCATE, 2001). Research on PDS

shows that partnerships between teacher training institutions and schools have improved the teacher training process by lengthening internships to a year of teaching practice in an actual school environment.

This study focused on the perceptions of mentor teachers in a PDS regarding the effectiveness of mentoring strategies used to promote mutual benefits for themselves and student teachers they mentor, benefits realized from mentoring in a PDS, level of support and guidance extended to mentor teachers, and recommendations for change to make mentoring more effective in a PDS.

Data Collection Overview

The study used a concurrent triangulation convergence mixed-methods research design to collect and analyze quantitative and qualitative data, separately, on the perceptions of mentor teachers in a PDS (Creswell & Clark, 2007; Creswell, Clark, Gutmann, & Hanson, 2003). Quantitative data were collected using an online survey questionnaire with Likert-scale type questions that measured mentor teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of mentoring strategies used in promoting mutual benefits for mentor and student teachers; professional development benefits obtained by mentor teachers in a PDS; the levels of support and guidance provided for mentors in a PDS. Qualitative data were collected using one-on-one audio-taped interviews with three mentor teachers. Results from quantitative and qualitative data were compared during the analysis stage and converged during the interpretation phase. Both forms of data were collected at the same time, giving equal priority to quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection. The purpose of using a mixed-methods design was to obtain

comparable data on the same phenomenon and develop detailed descriptions of mentor teachers' perceptions, thereby building a better understanding of the research problem.

One survey was electronically distributed to all 15 mentor teachers at Twinsdale elementary school, in May, 2010. The same survey was again resent to seven mentor teachers who did not respond the first time, in August and September, 2010. The purpose of the survey was to collect data on perceptions of mentor teachers regarding the effectiveness of mentoring strategies used to promote mutual benefits for mentors and interns in the PDS; the benefits obtained by mentors in a PDS; and the level of support and guidance extended to mentors in the PDS. Eight teachers responded to the survey that was distributed in May, and there were no responses from the survey resent in September. The purpose for resending the survey in September was to make an attempt to raise the response rates, away from the hustle and bustle of end of year school closing activities that characterized the month of May.

The survey consisted of four sections, including section one, with seven questions for collecting demographic information on participants, and 47 Likert-scale type questions which were divided into three sections, corresponding with the three research questions addressed by this study. The first part of the Likert-scale type questions consisted of mentoring strategies that may be used to mentor interns. These were rated on a scale of 1 to 4, to indicate if mentors had used a given strategy, and the extent to which they found such a strategy effective in promoting mutual benefits for teacher development. The second part described professional development benefits that may be enjoyed by mentors in a PDS. These were rated on a scale of 1 to 4, to show the extent to

which mentors agreed to be enjoying the described benefit. The third part described the support and guidance strategies that may be extended to mentor teachers in a PDS. Teachers rated these questions on a scale of 1 to 4 to express the extent to which they obtained help in their mentoring work.

Quantitative data were processed using descriptive statistics. Written explanation, graphs and pie charts were used to display results from the seven demographic questions. Raw scores for Likert-scale type questions were entered in an SPSS computer program to generate frequency tables and percentages of ratings for each of the 47 questions in sections 2 to 4. The frequency tables and percentages for individual questions were combined and represented in 3 summary tables, yielding summaries of responses for each section, corresponding to the three research questions.

The qualitative portion of this study was developed using interviews (see Appendix A) consisting of five semi-structured questions. The questions were designed to enable mentor teachers to expand on responses given in the survey questionnaire, and provide a more detailed account of their perceptions of the mentoring process in the PDS. Interview data were processed using four iterative steps: reading/memoing, describing, classifying and interpreting, (Gay & Airasian, 2000).

Quantitative Research Findings

Demographic Information

Eight of the 15 elementary school mentor teachers responded to an online survey questionnaire consisting of 54 statements. Responses from seven participants were included in the quantitative analysis of results for this study. One set of responses was

excluded from the study because the respondent skipped answering many of the questions.

All seven participants in this study were female mentor teachers. They taught different grade levels including, one for each of the grades 1, 2, 3, 6 and 8 and two for grade 5, as displayed in Figure 1 below.

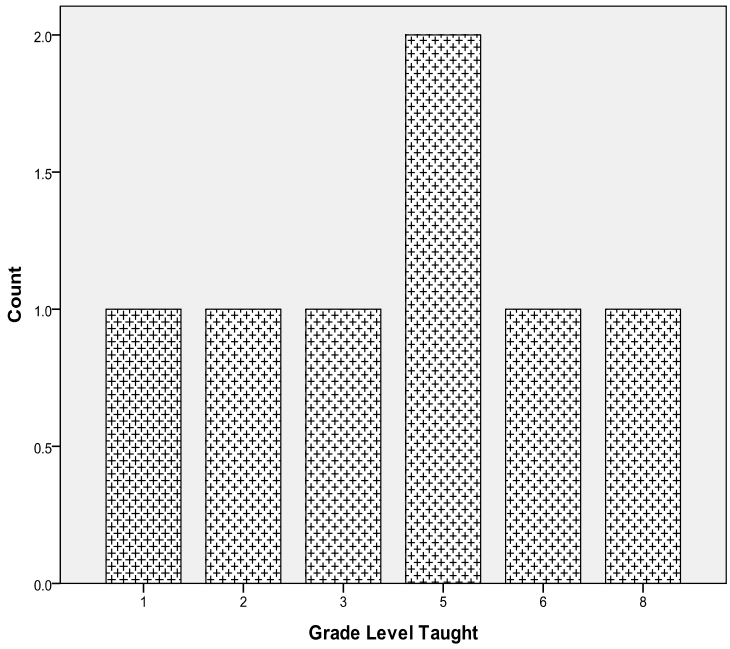


Figure 2. Participants by Grade Levels Taught

Three of the teacher mentors attended a PDS, while four of them did not attend a PDS. Figure 3 below displays these results.

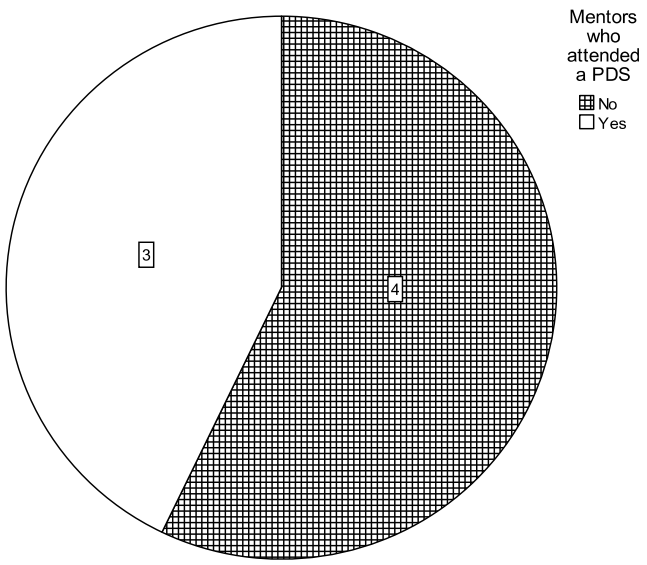


Figure 3. Teachers' Attendance in a PDS

About 57.1% (4 out of 7) of the participants had been teacher mentors in a non-PDS, while 42.9% (3 out of 7) of them had never been teacher mentors in a non-PDS (see Figure 4 below).

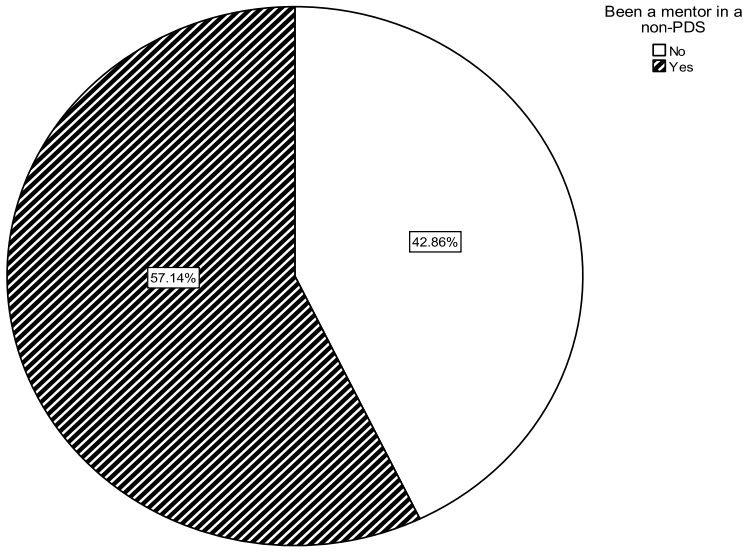


Figure 4. Teachers' Mentoring Experience in a Non-PDS

Six of the participants had been teaching for more than five years, while one of them had been teaching for five years. Similarly, six of the mentor teachers had been teaching in the PDS for more than five years, while one of them had been teaching in the PDS for five years. Figure 5 below displays the above results.

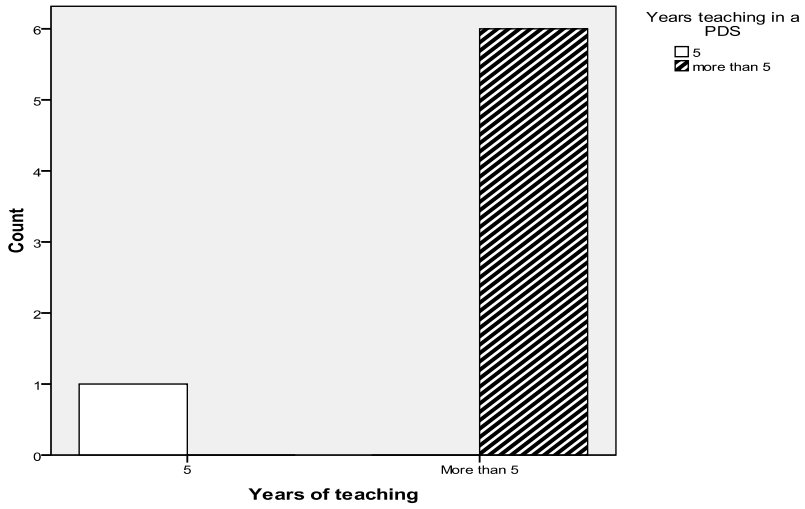


Figure 5. Mentor Teachers' Teaching Experience

Three of the participants had been teacher mentors in a PDS for more than five years, another three of the participants had been teacher mentors in a PDS for five years and one of the participants had been a teacher mentor in a PDS for one year.

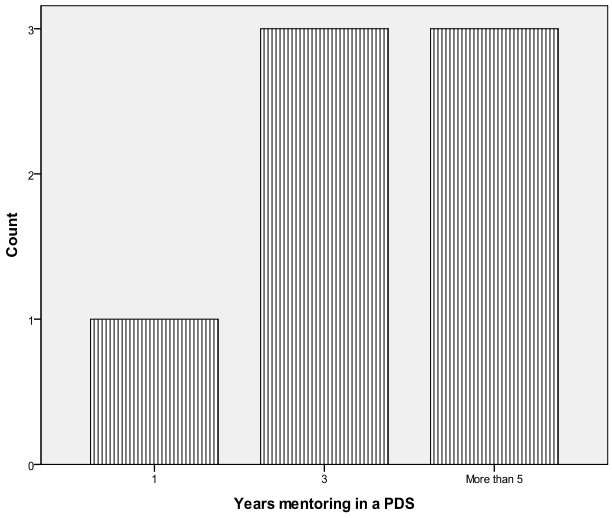


Figure 6. Teachers' Mentoring Experience in a PDS

Analysis of Quantitative Results

The analyses of the quantitative portion of this study were guided and sorted by the three research questions below:

1. What mentoring strategies are perceived by mentors as effectively producing mutual benefits for mentor teachers and student teachers in a PDS?
2. What professional benefits do mentor teachers perceive as resulting from working in a PDS?
3. What is the perceived level of support and guidance for mentor teachers in a PDS?

Research Question One

What mentoring strategies are perceived by mentor teachers as effectively producing mutual benefits for mentors and student teachers in a PDS?

Overall, more than 50% of the participants rated 22 of the 26 mentoring strategies very effective in promoting mutual benefits for mentor and student teachers in the PDS. Table 1 below displays the detailed results of teachers' ratings for each mentoring strategy.

Topping the list were two mentoring strategies that were rated "very effective" by 100% (all seven) of the participants. These were:

- Explained why I choose to do things a certain way, and
- Allowed interns to make mistakes.

The ratings for the two strategies above indicate that mentor teachers showed a unanimous preference for reflective teaching strategies. Teachers who take time to ponder their decisions and actions and the reasons behind their choices are very likely to consider all viable options and therefore, tend to choose the best alternative available to them. Similarly, by allowing interns to make mistakes, mentor teachers seemed to be encouraging interns not only to learn by doing, but also to develop reflective teaching techniques, as well.

Table 1

Teachers' Perceptions of the Effectiveness of Mentoring Strategies in a PDS

Mentoring Strategies	Ratings of Effectiveness of Mentoring Strategies				
	1 Never Used	2 Not Effective	3 Moderately Effective	4 Very Effective	Total
Allowed interns to make mistakes				100% (7)	100%
Allowed the intern to manage a full lesson to a portion of a class	42.9% (3)		28.6% (2)	28.6% (2)	100%
Alternated in taking lead positions to teach components of a co-planned lesson			28.6% (2)	71.4% (5)	100%
Assigned a work space in the classroom for the intern			14.3% (1)	85.7% (6)	100%
Assigned interns to learning stations	14.3% (1)		42.9% (3)	42.9% (3)	100%
Assisted intern to connect university coursework to the reality of the classroom			28.6% (2)	57.1% (4)	100%*
Assisted only when requested by the intern	14.3 %(1)	28.6% (2)	14.3% (1)	42.9% (3)	100%
Collaborated with the intern in designing the lesson			28.6% (2)	71.4% (5)	100%
Complemented interns for tasks well done			14.3% (1)	85.7% (6)	100%
Cooperated with the intern to reflect on performance and suggest areas of improvement			28.6% (2)	71.4% (5)	100%
Demonstrated teaching expertise for interns in a live classroom			14.3% (1)	85.7% (6)	100%
Discussed the school curriculum with the intern			14.3% (1)	85.7% (6)	100%
Encouraged interns to observe in many classrooms			57.1% (4)	42.9% (3)	100%

Table 1 (continued)

Mentoring Strategies	Ratings of Effectiveness of Mentoring Strategies				
	1 Never Tried	2 Not Effective	3 Effective	4 Very Effective	Total
Explained why I do things a certain way				100% (7)	100%
Guided interns to acquire content knowledge			42.9% (3)	57.1% (4)	100%
Invited intern to suggest alternative forms of instruction			14.3% (1)	85.7% (6)	100%
Made paraphrasing an important communication tool	14.3% (1)		28.6% (2)	57.1% (4)	100%
Made time to relax and laugh with the intern			14.3% (6)	85.7% (6)	100%
Provided observation guiding questions		14.3% (1)	28.6% (2)	57.1% (4)	100%
Regarded giving feedback a very important responsibility			28.6% (2)	71.4% (5)	100%
Regarded interns as colleagues			14.3% (1)	85.7% (6)	100%
Taken pictures of the intern and students performing different activities	28.6% (2)		14.3% (1)	57.1% (4)	100%
Treated interns as my equals in front of students			14.3% (1)	85.7% (6)	100%
Tried new teaching techniques suggested by the interns			42.9% (3)	57.1% (4)	100%
Written notes of encouragement to interns			14.3% (1)	85.7% (6)	100%

Additionally, nine mentoring strategies were rated “very effective” by 85.7% (6 out of 7) of the participants. These were:

- Discussed the school curriculum with the interns;
- Demonstrated my teaching expertise for interns in a live classroom;

- Divided the lesson into small manageable units and designated the intern to cover a specified learning task at one of the learning stations;
- Invited the intern to suggest alternative forms of instruction;
- Designated a special workspace in my classroom for the intern;
- Treated interns as my equals in front of students;
- Complemented the intern for tasks well done;
- Regarded interns as colleagues;
- Made time to relax and have a good laugh with the intern.

With the above ratings, mentor teachers showed a strong orientation towards use of collaborative mentoring strategies. In this PDS, mentors treated interns as colleagues, working together for a common purpose. The strategies above are likely to create a supportive learning environment that blurs the distinction between teacher and learner.

Five mentoring strategies were rated "very effective" by 71.4% (5 out of 7) of the participants. These strategies included:

- Encouraged interns to participate in making decisions;
- Regarded giving feedback an important part of my mentoring responsibilities;
- Collaborated with the intern in designing the lesson;
- Got together with the intern after a collaboratively planned lesson to reflect on our performance and suggest areas of improvement;
- Planned a lesson together with the intern, divided components of the lesson between ourselves, and alternated teaching the lesson.

Again, ratings of the five mentoring strategies above reflect collaborative mentoring strategies that enabled mentors to work together with interns, while at the same time encouraging the interns to practice skills that support independency and competence in the practice of teaching.

Furthermore, six mentoring strategies were rated very effective by 57.1% (4 out of 7) of the participants. These strategies included:

- Provided the intern with observation guiding questions,
- Guided the intern in acquiring the content knowledge;
- Assisted the intern to make the connection between the university coursework and the reality of the classroom;
- Tried a new teaching technique at the suggestion of the intern;
- Managed and monitored a full lesson to a portion of the class, while the intern did the same for the other portion of the class;
- Taken pictures of the intern performing different activities with the students

Ratings in this section continue to reflect collaborative mentoring strategies, encourage learning by doing, assist interns to apply lessons learned to the practice of teaching and maintain a supportive learning environment for all participants.

Some participants indicated that they had not tried the mentoring strategies listed below:

- Three of the participants had never allowed the intern to manage a full lesson to a portion of the class, while the mentor teacher managed the other half.

- Two of the participants had never taken pictures of the intern performing different tasks with the students,

One in each of the categories below had:

- Never made paraphrasing an important communication tool
- Never assigned interns to learning stations
- Never provided assistance only where it was requested by the interns.

The list of less preferred mentoring strategies, and number of people who had not used some of the mentoring strategies is very small. This means that mentor teachers find most of the recommended strategies very useful and use them widely.

Research Question Two

What professional benefits do mentor teachers perceive as resulting from working in a PDS?

Overall, all seven participants (100%) chose to "strongly agree" or "agree" with seven of the 12 statements describing professional development benefits that are enjoyed by mentor teachers in a PDS. More than half of the participants, 57.1% felt that they needed no additional training to manage mentoring in a PDS, while a similar percentage, 57.1% rejected the statement that "I do not discern any professional development benefits resulting from working in a PDS." It is clear from these results that mentor teachers were benefiting from the mentoring process and hardly needed additional training to handle mentoring duties effectively. Table 2 below gives detailed results.

Table 2

Mentor Teachers' Perceptions of Benefits Resulting from Mentoring in a PDS

Benefits to mentor teachers in a PDS	Ratings for benefits to mentor teachers in a PDS				
	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Agree	4 Strongly Agree	Total
Adapt new ways of teaching using ideas expressed by the intern			14.3% (1)	85.7% (6)	100%
Discern no professional development benefits	14.3% (1)	42.9% (3)	28.6% (2)	14.3% (1)	100%
Enrich my teaching repertoire by reflecting on the work of interns			14/3% (1)	71.4% (5)	100%*
More informed about current research on educational issues			57.1% (4)	42.9% (3)	100%
More involved in decision making			42.9% (3)	57.1% (4)	100%
Offered substantial training to be a mentor teacher		28.6% (2)	28.6% (2)	42.9% (3)	100%
Receive practice in translating theory into practice			28.6% (2)	71.4% (5)	100%
Reflect on what I do and the reason for doing it				100% (7)	100%
Spend more time on lesson planning		28.6% (2)	28.6% (2)	42.9% (3)	100%
Still need training to be manage mentoring in a PDS	42.9% (3)	14.3% (1)	14.3% (1)	28.6% (2)	100%
Suggest schedule changes to accommodate mentoring responsibilities			42.9%(3)	57.1% (4)	100%
Work in a more organized classroom setting		28.6% (2)	28.6 (2)	42.9% (3)	100%

*Missing data: the participant did not answer one of the questions.

More than 50% of the participants chose to "strongly agree" with six of the 12 statements describing the professional development benefits experienced by mentor teachers in the PDS. All seven participants (100%) chose to "strongly agree" that

mentoring helped them to reflect on what they do and reasons for doing it. This benefit corresponds perfectly with the most preferred mentoring strategies which were supportive of reflective teaching strategies.

About 71.4% (5 out of 7) chose to "strongly agree" that mentoring:

- Enriched their teaching repertoire by allowing them to reflect on the work of the interns.
- Offered them practice in the translation of theory into practice.

These benefits show that learning in the PDS is a two-way process; mentor teachers train interns to develop teaching skills and become independent, competent practitioners, while at the same time, they learn from interns, new skills and procedures that improve their own teaching techniques.

About 57.1% (4 out of 7) chose to "strongly agree" that mentoring:

- Enabled them to be more involved in decision making
- Gave them a chance to play an important part in suggesting schedule changes to accommodate mentoring responsibilities.

Sharing in the decision making process is an effective way of ensuring that changes in school policy and practice are broad based and far-reaching to address the concerns of individual teachers and learners.

Research Question Three

What is the perceived level of support and guidance for mentor teachers in a PDS?

Over all, all seven (100%) participants expressed agreement with 4 of 8 statements describing the kind of support and guidance they receive to fulfill their mentoring duties in the PDS, with 85.7% (6 out of 7) choosing to "strongly agree" that:

- The university/site supervisor gives accurate information concerning the PDS
- The university/site supervisor gives timely information for managing the PDS affairs

About 71.4% (5 out of 7) choose to "strongly agree" that they received advice from the university faculty when they needed it, with 57.1% choosing to "strongly agree" that they have access to resources that enable them to fulfill their mentoring responsibilities.

Mentor teachers perceived the highest level of support and guidance to come from the university/site supervisor. This individual has an operating office at the PDS and acts as a link between the university and the PDS. The supervisor oversees the mentoring process by assigning student teachers to respective mentor teachers, guiding interns to prepare for teaching practice, and giving advice to interns and mentors on a variety of teaching practice issues. Table 3 below gives details of the results.

Table 3

Mentor Teachers' Perceptions of Levels of Support and Guidance in a PDS

Level of support and guidance	Ratings of levels of support and guidance by percentages and numbers				
	1 Strongly disagree	2 Disagree	3 Agree	4 Strongly agree	Total
Have access to resources to fulfill mentoring responsibilities			42.9%(3)	57.1%(4)	100%
Have clear guidelines and channels for obtaining help from the university		14.3%(1)		85.7%(6)	100%
Often seek help from the university faculty/site supervisor		42.9%(3)	42.9%(3)	14.3%(1)	100%
Receive advice from the university faculty when I need it			28.6%(2)	71.4%(5)	100%
Receive less than expected help from the university on the PDS program	57.1%(4)	14.3%(1)	14.3%(1)	14.3%(1)	100%
Reference the PDS handbook to clarify procedures and responsibilities		14.3%(1)	57.1%(4)	28.6%(2)	100%
Site supervisor gives accurate information concerning the PDS			14.3%(1)	85.7%(6)	100%
Site supervisor gives timely information for managing the PDS affairs			14.3%(1)	85.7%(6)	100%

Other perceived levels of support and guidance included:

- About 85.7% (6 out of 7) of the participants chose to "strongly agree" that, there are clear guidelines and properly disclosed channels for obtaining help from the university for the PDS program.

More than 50% of the participants admitted that:

- They refer to the PD/S handbook to clarify procedures and responsibilities (85.7%)
- They often seek help from the university faculty/site supervisor (57.1%)

Finally, more than 70% of the participants, with 57.1% choosing to “strongly disagree” and 14.3% choosing to “disagree”, rejected the statement that, “I receive less than expected help from the university regarding the PDS program.” It is clear from the above results that the university is playing a crucial part in building and sustaining the PDS partnership.

Qualitative Research Findings

Qualitative results were developed using interview data gathered from three mentor teachers. All three teachers were female with five or more years of teaching experience. Qualitative data were analyzed using four iterative steps recommended by Gay and Airasian (2000). These include: reading or memoing, describing, analyzing and interpreting.

The findings from qualitative data were organized under five subtitles that represented the five interview questions, including a section labeled general issues for analyzing relevant data that did not fit in the four predetermined categories. The subtitles included:

1. Professional development benefits from mentoring in the PDS
2. Mentoring strategies that promote teacher development
3. Helpful resources and support strategies for mentor teachers
4. Recommendations for change
5. General issues

Reading of the three transcribed interview data and field notes produced categories that are displayed in Table 4 below.

Table 4

Summary of Themes from Interview Data

Interview # 1-Sarah	**Interview # 2-Tracey**	**Interview # 3-Megan**
Benefits from mentoring • Getting new ideas from interns • Get extra help in the classroom, and try more than one instructional techniques • Energetic, enthusiastic, hardworking interns • Reflecting on teaching skills when explaining what is being done and why	**Benefits from mentoring** • Becoming a reflective practitioner • Self-evaluation and correction of mistakes • Receive positive criticism from student teachers	**Benefits from mentoring** • Feeling valued • Extremely reflective • Encourages improvement of practice • Develop confidence in one's practice
Mentoring Strategies that promote mutual benefits • Communication between the mentor and intern • Model teaching skills for the intern • Maintain a good relationship with the intern • Share personal teaching experience with the intern • Acknowledge personal limitations and explain how to work on them • Allow interns to make mistakes, and encourage them to learn from them • Encourage use of new ideas • Give feedback • Respect the intern as a fellow teacher • Give a honest appraisal of one's teaching practice skills, and a plan for improvement • Interns meet school's and teachers' expectations	**Mentoring strategies that promote mutual benefits** • Open communication • Developing an individual study plan for interns • Cooperation with fellow mentors • Showing compassion and understanding • Allowing time for interns to learn • Encourage and support creativity • Learn new teaching techniques • Practice of new skills • Co-planning and co-teaching with the intern • Demonstrating teaching skills	**Mentoring strategies that promote mutual benefits** • Open communication • Give constructive criticism • Teach interns to give constructive criticism • Open about own deficiencies • Give a complete picture of the profession/school system • Allow interns to practice skills under guidance • Assign actual teaching tasks so interns can learn by doing

Table 4 (continued)

Interview #1-Sarah	Interview #2-Tracey	Interview #3-Megan
Guidance & Support Strategies • Availability of a site supervisor on the school grounds • Full involvement of site supervisor in student affairs • Site supervisor advises mentors too • Working with well prepared, highly qualified interns	**Guidance & Support strategies** • Site supervisor very helpful • Getting help to handle individual interns • Selecting interns suited to teaching • Preparing interns well	**Guidance & Support Strategies** • The PDS handbook • University is proactive in tackling teacher quality issues • Guidelines for assessing interns • Supportive, well-informed site supervisor
General points • Willingness to participate, proud to be involved • Experience in mentoring non-PDS student teachers • Comparison between PDS and regular teacher preparation program • Principal is very supportive • Love the PDS program • Students very successful in the field	**General points** • Willingness to participate • Personal experience as a student teacher • Likes PDS set up • Experience in mentoring non-PDS teachers	**General points** • Willingness to participate • Considered it an honor to be involved • Enjoy mentoring duties • Personal experience • Incredibly valuable program
Suggestions for improvement • Prepare interns to handle cultural diversity issues, e.g. ESL background	**Suggestions for improvement** • Continue the selection process	**Suggestions for improvement** • Recognize the worthiness of teacher's knowledge and skills • Utilize teachers' expertise beyond elementary school grounds

Professional Development Benefits from Mentoring in the PDS

Encourages use of reflective teaching practice techniques. All three participants strongly felt that mentoring in the PDS enabled them to focus on improving teaching practice through constant appraisal of their performance, in areas such as, lesson planning, and choice of learning activities, instructional techniques and intended learning goals. Speaking of the influence of mentoring on developing reflective teaching techniques, Megan observed that:

> It really gave me a structure to be reflective, to always be questioning, why am I doing this? Because it is one thing to be able to defend it (your practice) to a principal you do not see very often, but it is another to have to defend, and I mean in a positive way, defend, your activities, your lesson plans, your curriculum, to somebody you are mentoring into the program.

Mentors explained that they teach interns to use reflective teaching techniques, as well.

Improves teaching practice. Participants readily agreed that mentoring in the PDS enabled them to apply the best of their teaching skills. This is because mentors have to explain their teaching plans and actions to the interns. Explaining this process, Sarah said: "I am giving them feedback and self evaluation. This is what I did; this is why I did it. This is where I did something wrong, and I shouldn't do it next time." Megan saw it as being able to rationalize goals and actions.

Acquire and practice new teaching skills. Teaching interns to practice new skill was perceived as one of the most important goals of the PDS. Megan emphasized that

interns in her classroom are encouraged to participate directly in performing teaching tasks almost immediately, because teachers learn by doing. Mentors acknowledged that they learn new skills from interns, and get the opportunity to practice the new skills with the help of the interns. Sarah explained that she readily adapts new ideas that are beneficial to her classroom and uses the extra assistance given by interns to try more than one instructional technique in her classroom. Tracey explained that she encouraged interns to use new strategies and requested copies of their work to keep in her files for future references.

Mentoring Strategies that Promote Mutual Teacher Development

Open communication. All three participants emphasized the importance of openness and exchange of ideas between the intern and the mentor teacher. Tracey cited open communication as an effective strategy for conquering the discomfort associated with criticizing a less experienced, shy, vulnerable intern. This is how she put it:

> It was most beneficial to be able to openly communicate with her, and have a relationship with her, where we were trusting in each other that she was open to hearing what I had to say, and that it was coming from a place that was for her benefit, and not to put her down.

Mentors explained how communication in the PDS is a cycle that embraces other practitioners, such as, the site supervisor and fellow mentors, to enable different groups to work together to solve learning problems. Tracey explained that cooperating with fellow teachers who were working with the shy intern mentioned, above, helped them all come up a suitable individual study plan for the intern.

Enabling interns to practice teaching skills. Teachers placed a high value on the practice of teaching skills. Though interns come to the PDS knowing in great detail what they are supposed to do, they need to put it into practice to be able to understand it fully and apply it correctly. Megan explained that her number one strategy was "to allow them (interns), with a lot of guidance, to do a lot". She further explained that, interns need to be assigned actual teaching tasks because they learn by doing. She made sure that, interns in her classroom performed tasks that were directly related to managing children's learning. Sarah viewed it as encouraging interns to use new ideas. She explained: "And I always tell them, try new ideas. Try anything you want; just tell me before you teach something, and I will guide you."

Sharing personal experience. This was a favorite strategy for all three participants. Teachers made frequent references to their own experiences as student teachers, and how these experiences affected their decisions when working with interns. Referring to her personal experience, Tracey explained:

> I wasn't given much guidance. I was able to be creative and to do whatever I wanted. So, we obviously have very strict guidelines in the curriculum, but I still want him/her to be able to create something unique and different, to be able to show their personality.

Similarly, teachers discussed comfortably, how sharing their own deficiencies were a very effective strategy for building confidence and trust between interns and mentor teachers. Tracey called for compassion, and explained how important it is to remember that the interns are undergoing their first teaching experience, and need time to learn.

Giving and receiving constructive criticism. Mentor teachers acknowledged the making an honest appraisal of their performance, and developing a readiness to accept correction from others was an effective strategy for promoting teacher development. Constructive criticism was explained as being able to complement one another on tasks well done, pointing out exactly what went well, and why it did so; while at the same time pointing out areas that needed improvement. Mentors used this skill to help interns learn the teaching skills, and also taught interns to use it on themselves and others, starting with mentor teachers.

Allowing interns to make mistakes. In addition to acknowledging personal limitations, mentor teachers were willing to allow interns to make mistakes. Sarah expressed this attitude very clearly as follows: "And I always tell them (interns), making mistakes is no problem, because this stage of teaching is trial and error stage. You make mistake, and you learn from them."

Giving feedback. Mentors considered giving feedback a very important part of the formation process of interns. Feedback enabled mentors to talk about what went well with the lesson, and what didn't, and to develop strategies for improving the teaching practice.

Demonstrating teaching skills. Mentor teachers considered it their duty to model teaching skills for the interns. For instance, taking time to develop and explain the lesson planning process. In return, interns were expected to use the demonstrated skills in their practice of teaching, or apply other acquired skills that may be new to mentor teachers, as long as they were able to explain their choices and purpose of actions.

Resources and Support Strategies for Mentor Teachers

Site-supervisor. The highest rate of approval was accorded to the university supervisor, whom mentors described using terms like:

- Supportive
- Well informed
- Experienced
- Knowledgeable
- Competent
- Really great
- Very helpful
- A huge resource
- Someone with a fresh perspective
- Someone with a different set of eyes

The supervisor was shown as forming a connection point for all activities, procedures and policies in the PDS.

Working with well-prepared interns. Mentor teachers showed appreciation for the quality of interns they worked with. Some of the terms that were used to describe interns included:

- Well-prepared
- Suited to teach
- Hardworking
- Responsible

- High quality
- Giving 100% commitment
- Highly professional
- Fully prepared
- Enthusiastic
- Eager to learn

Getting help to handle individual interns. Mentor teachers expressed appreciation for getting assistance to handle problems of individual interns. The site supervisor knew the interns well enough to give specific advice regarding handling issues with individual students.

Giving advice to mentor teachers. Mentor teachers admitted that they too need help with mentoring issues, and found this help by talking to the site supervisor. The supervisor knows teacher mentors well enough to give them useful advice on mentoring and practice issues.

Being active in handling teacher quality issues. Interview participants showed appreciation for the quality of interns they work with, in their school. They specifically mentioned a selective process at the university that weeded out less serious individuals before they got to the PDS school for the practice of teaching. They also explained that the university personnel act promptly to remove from the program interns who do not qualify for the teaching role.

Receiving guidelines for assessing interns. In addition to the site supervisor who renders assistance in handling issues with individual student teachers, mentors receive

guidelines for assessing interns. Some of these guidelines are found in the PDS handbook which was mentioned as one of the helpful resources used by mentor teachers.

Recommendations for Change

Handling cultural diversity. One of the mentor teachers explained the need to prepare teachers to handle cultural diversity. Interns need to learn how to teach children with different cultural backgrounds, as well as, children with varying learning problems, such as inability to speak English.

Recognize the worthiness of knowledge and skills of practicing teachers. Mentor teachers felt that they were not receiving sufficient recognition and appreciation for their knowledge and expertise in the field of teaching. Megan referred to this situation as follows:

> We know how to teach children (with emphasis), probably much better than the professors who either have not been in the classroom before, or haven't been in the classroom for many years, to see the realities of what we are doing, and how we do it; the struggles we face, and how well we can do it as well.

One mentor suggested that recognition of teachers' expertise be expressed by inviting teachers to share their knowledge and expertise beyond the elementary school grounds. For example, invite mentor teachers to the university to talk to student teachers about methods of teaching specific subjects.

Continue the selection process. Mentor teachers were pleased by working with well-prepared, hardworking, enthusiastic students. They wished that the

selection process be maintained so that they host interns who are suitable candidates for the teaching profession.

General Issues

Willingness to participate. All three mentor teachers indicated that they willingly accepted to be part of the PDS and found great joy in accomplishing their mentoring duties. Megan said she felt both flattered and honored to be asked very early on in her career, to become involved in the PDS. Sarah regarded it "a blessing to have a student teacher in my classroom".

Prior experience. Mentor teachers constantly referred to their personal experiences either as student teachers or mentors in other programs to explain their perceptions of the PDS. Teachers explained how their memory of what it was like, to be student teachers, made them more considerate and patient when dealing with interns. They explained how they used their personal experiences as student teachers to encourage interns to stay focused and persevere. They also used personal experiences to determine what was important to transmit to interns.

Strong preference for the PDS program. Two of the interview participants had mentoring experience in traditional teacher education programs. As a result, they frequently compared mentoring in the PDS program to mentoring in the traditional teacher education programs. Their comparative views included the following:

Table 5

Mentoring in a PDS vs. Mentoring in a Traditional Teacher Education Program

Mentoring in PDS Program	**Mentoring in Traditional Teacher Education Program**
A full year of student teaching	One semester of student teaching
Favorable to developing working relationships among teachers	Too short for teachers to know each other well and work together
Interns make genuine progress in improving their teaching skills and put in extra effort to prepare and deliver well planned lessons throughout the internship period	Supervised lessons are better prepared to impress the supervisor, while unsupervised lessons may be done haphazardly, and delivered unimpressively

Time factor. Lack of time was not listed as a major problem for mentor teachers in this study. Instead, interview participants appreciated the extra help provided by the interns in their classrooms. This enabled them to experiment with new ways of doing things, and to accomplish more than they would single handedly. This is similar to what Shroyer, et al. (2007) described as a culture of "collaboration, inquiry and continuous growth" (p. 222) that leads PDS partners to appreciate innovation, experimentation and risk taking, all of which drive the improvement process. Mentors readily integrated their teaching schedules with mentoring duties because they know how to teach teachers; teaching teachers is similar to teaching children (Yendol-Hoppey, 2007); interns are qualified for the teaching job, teachers need extra help in their classrooms.

Interpretation of Research Results

Merging of Data

Applying reflective teaching techniques. Both quantitative and qualitative results showed that all mentor teachers in this study had a strong commitment to use reflective teaching techniques and to develop these techniques among the interns they mentored. All seven participants in the quantitative part of the study perceived reflective teaching strategies to be very effective in promoting mutual benefits for mentors and interns in PDS. In the qualitative portion of the study, mentor teachers explained that reflective teaching strategies such as, questioning and explaining their choices of goals and activities, performing self evaluation, scrutinizing their lesson plans, and seeking for constructive criticism from interns helped them to improve their teaching practice. Similarly, mentor teachers explained that they encouraged the development of reflective teaching techniques among interns by allowing them to question what they do and why they do it. Other strategies used by mentor teachers to develop reflective teaching techniques included, "allowing interns to make mistakes" so that they can learn from them, applying constructive criticism when evaluating the work of interns as well as teaching interns to give constructive criticism when evaluating the work of mentor teachers; giving an honest appraisal of one's practice skills, and acknowledging personal limitations.

Collaborative mentoring strategies. Responses from the survey questionnaire and interviews revealed that mentor teachers had a strong preference for mentoring strategies that enabled them to work side by side with interns as equal partners. The quantitative

results showed that 16 mentoring strategies that accorded interns full teacher status and described respectable working relationships between the intern and mentor teacher were rated "very effective" by more than half of the mentor teachers. In the qualitative findings, mentor teachers explained that interns fit in well with their school agenda, were well-prepared, hardworking, responsible, energetic, enthusiastic and eager to learn or use the knowledge and skills they had acquired from the college courses. Speaking of how she reconciled her school schedule with mentoring duties, Sarah said:

> They (interns) have read the books and they are coming to see the practical in the classroom. . . . I do not see a problem with taking a student teacher because they perfectly fit in our schedule, and I do not see them doing something different.

The above findings are similar to findings made in related studies on PDS. In a study by Shroyer et al. (2007) the PDS partners agreed that the greatest impact of renewal efforts in the PDS was "enhanced collaboration, understanding and awareness of, and personal reflection on, teaching and learning" (p. 222).

Assisting interns to practice teaching skills. Results from both quantitative and qualitative data showed that strategies that encouraged interns to practice teaching skills were "very effective" in promoting mutual benefits for mentors and interns in the PDS. In the interviews, mentor teachers described promoting processes such as modeled skills for interns, encouraged use of new ideas, allowed interns to practice new skills while helping to correct their mistakes, encouraged creativity, and developed quality lesson

plans as ways of helping interns to practice teaching skills. Mentors explained that these processes helped them to improve their teaching skills as well.

Working with a competent site-supervisor. Mentor teachers unanimously agreed that the PDS site-supervisor gave structure and order to the operation of the PDS. This individual assigned interns to mentor teachers, and gave valuable advice to both mentors and interns that enabled participants to remain on task and resolve problems.

Working with qualified, hardworking interns. Support was perceived also in terms of having the opportunity to work with well-prepared interns. Mentors teachers explained that their work was enhanced by the presence and commitment of interns who were willing and able to contribute to the teaching process, as much as they benefited from the mentoring process. Mentors used terms such as suited to teach, responsible, highly professional, fully prepared, to characterize the interns they worked with. Mentors explained how the university used selective policies to ensure that interns who were serious about teaching were admitted to the PDS program. Also, the university was praised for stepping in quickly to resolve matters regarding teacher candidates that were not suited to the teaching career.

Advice for mentors regarding handling interns and running the PDS program. Mentor teachers perceived support in terms of advice on a various issues regarding the management of the PDS and mentoring activities. They specifically explained how the site-supervisor helped them to resolve matters related to handling individual interns. In addition, the site supervisor helped to advise mentor teachers individually as teachers and helped them improve their practice. These finds collaborate with the high ratings for the

site supervisor in the survey questionnaire, and the acknowledgement that mentors received advice from the university supervisor when they needed it.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The idea to combine school processes to boost efficiency is not a new idea for schools. Dewey (1938) in his book, *Experience and Education* referred to the fragmentation of school processes as a waste of life and resources and argued for an integrated system that combines purposes across academic subjects, grade levels and institutional boundaries. The desire to unify effort and purpose in education defines the PDS agenda. The PDSs are partnerships between schools and universities, which are established to enable P-12 schools and teacher education institutions to effectively work together to promote mutual benefits. PDSs are developed on a foundation of shared interests, mutual commitment, and trust among members of different institutions, and have the potential to support continuous improvement of schools and universities (NCATE, 2001).

The PDS is built on principles that promise to simultaneously transform the teacher training process at the college level and the teaching and learning process at the P-12 level. Research findings show that for PDS to work effectively, schools and universities must take the initiative to invest the time and other resources necessary to sustain collaborative and supportive relationships between teacher training institution and P-12 school. Mentor teachers at Twinsdale PDS showed that they were fully prepared,

willing and devoted to support the partnership to benefit themselves, interns, and students. Participants did not seem to be phased out by the additional tasks and responsibilities that characterize PDS work. Instead, they credit the PDS experience for enriching their work by opening up opportunities to share what they know and do best while learning from others, e.g., interns and supervisors, different ways of improving their teaching practice.

The partnerships are guided and regulated by standards that were established to regulate and guide the partnerships towards achieving mutual benefits for all participants in a PDS partnership.

Professional Development Schools are changing the way pre-service teachers are prepared for school practice, and creating new roles and responsibilities for practicing teachers who are invited to share their expertise, classrooms and time, to prepare new teachers (Cooner & Tochterman, 2004). One of the significant contributions of the PDS partnerships is that they enable experienced practitioners who are conversant with the challenging, diversified contexts of the current school processes, to teach pre-service teachers using authentic school experiences. Yendol-Hoppey (2007) explains that the PDS affords mentors the opportunity to join the university faculty in building a vision for reforming teacher education, and playing a central role in achieving the vision by organizing learning experiences for interns under their mentorship.

There is growing evidence that the PDS partnerships are making a positive impact on P-12 students, continuing teachers, and teacher trainees, but these changes ought to be carefully measured taking into consideration the unique situations of each partnership,

differences in processes and achievements of various PDS partnerships. Teitel (2001) explains that assessing PDS impact is challenging but necessary for the growth and sustenance of the PDSs and the PDS movement. He suggests an assessment framework for PDSs that takes into consideration the organizational changes that affect relationships among structural entities such as the school and university, and the stakeholders and participants in them; change in roles, structure and culture for institutions and people involved in the PDS processes; application of best practices in teaching, learning and leadership; and gathering of data on achievement of desired learning outcomes for K-12 students, pre-service teachers, in-service teachers and other education personnel. Proper data on PDS impacts should be focused on processes that support the successful operation of the PDS, as well as on outcomes of PDSs for all participants. High-quality impact documentation can be used to make credible formative and summative decisions that enable participants to improve their performance while allowing all stakeholders to determine the worthiness of starting and maintaining PDSs.

Purpose and Overview of the Study

The first purpose of this study was to analyze mentor teachers' perceptions regarding the effectiveness of mentoring strategies used in a PDS to promote mutual benefits for both mentors and interns at Twinsdale elementary school. The second purpose was to determine mentor teachers' perceptions of the benefits they obtain from working in a PDS. The third purpose was to determine mentor teachers' perceptions of levels of support and guidance extended to them to enhance their mentoring work. Data were collected using quantitative and qualitative research methods. Quantitative data

were collected using an online survey questionnaire, which was sent to all the 15 mentor teachers at Twinsdale elementary school, in May 2010, and resent again in September 2010 to seven of the mentor teachers who did not respond to the survey sent in May. Qualitative data were collected using one-on-one interviews with three of the mentor teachers.

Eight of the 15 mentor teachers responded to the survey questionnaire which was administered in May, and no additional responses were generated from the survey which was administered in September 2010. Responses from seven mentor teachers were used to analyze the quantitative research results of this study. One set of responses was eliminated from analysis because the respondent skipped answering many of the questions. All seven participants were female elementary school teachers with five or more years of teaching experience. Three of the teachers had been mentoring in a PDS for more than five years; another three had been mentoring in a PDS for three years and one had been a mentoring in a PDS for one year.

The online survey questionnaire consisted of 53 questions that were divided into four sections. Section one collected demographic information about participants including, gender, grade level taught, and professional experience of individual participants. Section 2 consisted of 26 Likert-like scale questions that described mentoring strategies that may be used by mentor teachers to help interns to practice teaching. Section 3 consisted of 12 Likert-like scale questions that described benefits that may be enjoyed by mentor teachers in a PDS, and section 4 consisted of eight Likert-like

scale questions that described guidance and support strategies that may be applied to help mentor teachers to fulfill their mentoring responsibilities.

Qualitative data were gathered from three mentor teachers using five semi-structured interview questions. All three participants were female elementary school teachers with more than five years of teaching experience. The interview participants responded to the survey questionnaire first, before submitting their consent to participate in the interviews. The purpose of the interviews was to help elaborate on the responses given in the survey questionnaire and provide a detailed picture of teachers' perceptions of the PDS experience.

The five interview questions were designed to answer the same research questions addressed by the survey questionnaire, but from a different angle-the view point of individual participants. Consequently, interviews generated comparable data that were integrated with survey results to obtain a better understanding of mentor teachers' perceptions in the PDS. Interview data were organized into categories (Gay & Airasian, 2000) that responded to the same three research questions developed for the survey questionnaire thereby making it possible to compare and contrast results from quantitative and qualitative research methods. The interview categories included:

- Professional development benefits obtained from mentoring in a PDS
- Mentoring strategies that promote mutual teacher development
- Guidance and support strategies for mentor teachers
- Recommendations for change
- General issues

Categories 1 to 3 for the interview data generated results that were comparable to those generated by section 2 to 4 of the survey questionnaire; while categories 4 to 5 organized interview data that elaborated on the perceptions of mentor teachers in the PDS but did not fit in the categories presented by the three research questions.

Quantitative and qualitative data were integrated at the interpretation stage to represent responses to the following three research questions:

1. What mentoring strategies are perceived by mentor teachers to be effective in promoting mutual benefits for mentors and student teachers in a PDS?
2. What professional benefits do mentor teachers perceive as resulting from working in a PDS?
3. What is the perceived level of support and guidance for mentor teachers in a PDS?

The conclusions and recommendations for this study were developed using the integrated results of the quantitative and qualitative data, and were reported using the three research questions above and the two additional interview categories that contained data on general perceptions that did not fit in the categories of the three research questions.

Research Question One

What mentoring strategies are perceived by mentor teachers to be effective in promoting mutual benefits for mentors and student teachers in a PDS?

Teachers at Twinsdale elementary school expressed a high preference for collaborative mentoring strategies and perceived them to be effective in promoting

mutual benefits for interns and mentor teachers in a PDS. Twenty of the 26 mentoring strategies in section two of the questionnaire described collaborative mentoring strategies. All 20 strategies were rated as "moderately effective" or "very effective" by all mentor teachers in this study. Nine of the 20 collaborative mentoring strategies were rated "very effective" by 85.7% of the participants, and these included:

- Assigned a work space in the classroom for the intern
- Complemented interns for tasks well done
- Demonstrated teaching expertise for interns in a live classroom
- Discussed the school curriculum with the intern
- Invited the intern to suggest alternative forms of instruction
- Made time to relax and laugh with the intern
- Regarded interns as colleagues
- Treated interns as my equals in front of students
- Written notes of encouragement for the intern

Three collaborative mentoring strategies were rated "very effective" by 71.4% of the participants. These included:

- Alternated in taking a lead position with the intern to teach components of a co-planned lesson
- Collaborated with the intern in designing the lesson
- Cooperated with the intern to reflect on performance and suggest areas of improvement

In the interviews, mentor teachers explained that it was important and fitting to develop and maintain good working relationships with interns. This was because interns performed full teaching responsibilities and brought new ways of teaching that could be adapted by mentor teachers.

The preference for collaborative mentoring strategies is a critical characteristic of the PDS (NCATE, 2001). Partners in a PDS commit to engage in joint work at the institutional and individual levels to implement the PDS mission. Cozza (2010) observes that the PDS culture enables teachers at different levels to work together to improve teaching practice and build a deeper understanding of their own educational choices and decisions. The mentor teachers in this study collaboratively supported structural and role changes to promote the PDS agenda. For example, two mentor teachers taught college courses to interns at the PDS site. Mentors built and maintained good relations with interns by respecting them as fellow teachers and granting them opportunities to impact the teaching and learning process at the planning and instructional levels.

The highest level of rating was accorded to mentoring strategies that promoted use of reflective teaching techniques. Two mentoring strategies that enabled mentor teachers and interns to think critically about what they do and how they do it, were rated "very effective" by all the seven participants. These were:

- Allowed interns to make mistakes
- Explained why I do things a certain way

Teachers explained that mentoring in a PDS encouraged them to analyze the meaning and implication of their teaching plans and actions. In the interviews, all three mentor

teachers emphasized that it was important to develop and express a good understanding of their teaching plans and actions to themselves and others who have a stake in education. Tracey explained that the PDS afforded her the opportunity to "to look at what I am doing and reflect upon my practices and be able to explain why I am doing something, because if you can't explain why you are doing it, there is no validity in it". Teachers used reflective teaching techniques to create a clear picture for the interns of what was being accomplished, and to constantly look for ways of doing a better job next time around.

Similarly, mentor teachers placed a high value on teaching interns to use reflective teaching techniques. They encouraged the interns to practice reflective teaching skills as they experimented with the teaching process using what they learned in their college classrooms and the opportunities offered by a live school system. The practice of reflective teaching skills by mentor teachers offered first hand demonstrations to interns on how to use similar tactics in their own practice of teaching. Mentor teachers also explained that when interns are allowed to make mistakes, they develop the confidence to try innovative teaching techniques and tend to learn from their mistakes. In this sense, mentor teachers are in agreement with Ostorga (2006) who argues that holding teachers accountable for their professional actions requires giving them a voice and freedom to make pedagogic decisions that are well thought out. Both mentors and interns learn from the cyclic process of demonstrating the skills, and practicing them for each other's benefit. For example, as mentor teachers assist interns to analyze and reflect on

their teaching skills, they too learn new skills from interns and improve their own meaning-making process.

Helping interns to practice teaching skills. Teachers were appreciative of having an extra hand in the classroom, which enabled them to try different ways of teaching. Interns were in the PDS to learn the teaching process from the experienced practitioners, they learned by doing, thereby making a significant contribution to the classroom processes. In addition to high ratings for the collaborative mentoring strategies, interview participants explained that they used mentoring strategies that allowed interns to actively get involved in the instructional process. This was accomplished by assigning interns actual teaching tasks within the classroom and giving them the necessary support and guidance for developing the skills for an independent practice of teaching. Interns were encouraged to work alongside mentor teachers and to contribute to the teaching process as much as they were able to. Mentor teachers on their part, guided the performance of interns while remaining open to learn and adapt some of the new teaching techniques brought by interns from their college learning experiences.

Research Question Two

What professional benefits do mentor teachers perceive as resulting from working in a PDS?

Develop and use reflective teaching techniques. The highest rated benefit for mentor teachers in the PDS was being able to "reflect on what I do and the reason for doing it." All seven participants chose to "strongly agree" that mentoring helped them to carefully analyze their teaching decisions and actions, to ensure that they are relevant and

meaningful. In the interviews, mentor teachers explained that application of reflective teaching techniques helped them to appraise their teaching skills, and to improve their performance by finding better ways of teaching. One of the interview participants, Megan, explained that becoming a mentor teacher helped her to develop and apply reflective teaching techniques early on in her teaching career. Besides helping mentors clarify meaning and purpose to themselves, reflective teaching skills enabled mentors to communicate meaning and purpose for interns. In turn, interns used reflective teaching strategies to explain their plans and actions to mentor teachers, and to find ways of doing a better job.

Acquire and practice new teaching skills. In the survey questionnaire 85.7% of the participants strongly agreed that mentoring helped them to adapt new ways of teaching. Interns come to the PDS with new ideas which they practice under the guidance of mentors. Alternatively, mentors demonstrated teaching skills for the interns. So, both interns and mentor teachers learned something new and practiced it under each other's guidance. Sarah explained that she encouraged interns to practice new skills, while she guided them. Tracey indicated that it was important to encourage interns to be creative.

Improves teaching techniques. About 71.4% strongly agreed that mentoring enriched their teaching repertoire by allowing them to reflect on the work of the interns and another 71.4% strongly agreed that mentoring taught them to translate theory into practice, which also improved their teaching techniques. In the interviews, participants

explained how mentoring encouraged them to apply the best of their teaching techniques. This is because they had to explain their teaching plans and actions to the interns.

Research Question Three

What is the perceived level of support and guidance for mentor teachers in the PDS?

Mentor teachers unanimously affirmed that the university supervisor contributed substantially to the successful operation of the PDS. This individual exhibited a wide range of experiences covering administrative, supervisory, relational and instructional aspects of teaching. The university supervisor dispensed advice to both interns and mentor teachers. In the survey results, 85.7% of the participants strongly agreed that:

- They had proper channels and guidelines for obtaining assistance from the university.
- The supervisor gave them accurate information concerning the PDS.
- The supervisor gave them timely information for managing the PDS affairs.

In the interviews, it was very clear the supervisor played a central role in ensuring the successful operation of the PDS. Mentors showed that they trusted the supervisor to handle organizational and managerial aspects of the PDS, e.g., assigning interns to supervisors; solve problems that arise from the interaction between the mentors and the interns; and give advice to mentors and interns on different aspects of the mentoring process, including helping mentors deal with issues involving individual teacher candidates.

Next to the university supervisor, the PDS handbook was perceived to provide valuable support and guidance in the day-to-day management of the PDS. One of the interview participants declared that she knew this book from cover to cover. Moreover, 21 of the 26 mentoring strategies that are recommended for use in the PDS handbook were rated as moderately effective or very effective by all seven participants. This could mean that the mentors faithfully and reliably use the PDS handbook to guide and regulate their mentoring activities. This fact is supported by the finding that 85.7% of the participants chose to "agree" (57.1%) or "strongly agree" (28.6%) that the PDS handbook is a very important source of support for their mentoring work.

Although assessing PDS work is a complicated process, it is a highly recommended procedure for ensuring that PDSs remain focused on the founding principles. Wong and Glass (2005) noted that assessing PDS work even in a rudimentary form produced valuable data that were used to improve benefits for all, or identified areas of work that required extra attention. Results of this study show that mentor teachers in this school are committed to the PDS partnership. There are engaged in processes that are recommended in Latham, Crumpler and Moss's (2005) model for assessing professional development schools, such as, analyzing and reflecting on teaching practice by observing one another, supporting one another by giving ongoing feedback, and self-assessment.

In a PDS environment, common conflicts arising between the college curriculum and teaching practice are handled collaboratively by practicing teachers and university faculty. Therefore, they are often resolved satisfactorily. The ability to work together on

common problems enables participants to hold public discussions of teaching, examine problems, and devise solutions communally. Teachers show a deeper commitment to resolving differences in a manner that strengthens the partnership and builds teaching skills. In this study, in-service teachers expressed confidence in their knowledge and skills of teaching practice, which they were willing to share with interns and university faculty. They felt appreciated for being able to use their knowledge and skills profitably. This is similar to how teachers who assumed the role of university instructors felt in Cooner and Tochterman's (2004) study. They felt like professionals (pp. 188-189). They were appreciated and held in high esteem for their accomplishments.

Recommendations

First, mentor teachers admitted that they had a difficult time recommending changes for the PDS program at their school because they liked it very much. Their recommendations for change showed dedication and continued support for the PDS program at their school. Mentors were very confident that they were in position to contribute to the practical elements of the teaching process because it is what they do on a daily basis, and have the skills and experience that are worthy sharing with prospective teachers. They wanted to continue working in the PDS program and to expand their role beyond the elementary school boundaries.

Second, mentor teachers at Twinsdale elementary school showed unwavering support for the PDS program by expressing gratitude to be part of it and sharing their plans for its continued operation and progress. Contrary to rampant fears that practicing teachers are overburdened by additional responsibilities and extra work in the PDS

programs, teachers who participated in the interviews were pleased, and felt appreciated, to perform a much needed service in an area where they possessed expertise.

Third, given the enthusiasm and confidence of teachers in this study, it will be worthy while to expand the PDS and include more interns and teachers at this school. The organizational and administrative elements are already in place. The university has a large number of student teachers who stand to benefit from the program when they receive authentic training in live classrooms. The school stands to reap multiple benefits including the professional development of practicing teachers, first opportunity to employ well-qualified beginning teachers, affordable extra help in the classrooms, to mention but a few.

Fourth, create a conducive environment to foster productive interactions between the university faculty and PDS teachers. The teachers in this study are convinced that they have knowledge and skills to share with teacher trainees and university faculty. The results of this study show that teachers enjoy working with well-qualified interns in their classrooms, and are learning a great deal from each other. The school and university teachers, however, do not have similar opportunities to interact and learn from each other. Instead, teachers work with a site supervisor whom they find to be a great resource and support for their development. Increasing the opportunities for interaction/ communication between teachers and university faculty will greatly improve teacher quality both at the school and the university.

Fifth, encourage PDS teachers to pursue advanced degrees and/or initiate and participate in action research in their classrooms. A very important component of the

PDS agenda is promoting research-based practice. The interns bring new research-based ideas from the university, and attempt to put them into practice in the classrooms. Teachers who learn about these new ideas from students should have opportunities to develop them further for their own practice. The PDS partnership should lead efforts to help teachers improve their teaching skills and knowledge at affordable costs.

Recommendations for Future Studies

Given the small number of participants in this study, it will be advisable to repeat this study with a large number of participants so that comparisons could be made between perceptions of mentor teachers by grade levels being taught, gender and mentoring experience.

It will also be useful to study the perceptions of student teachers in the same PDS and to compare their views to those of mentor teachers.

Final Thoughts

In an era where teacher quality permeates every conversation on school improvement, and tops the list of school reform strategies, programs such as the PDS should be prioritized because they promise to simultaneously improve teacher quality and student performance. Darling-Hammond (2006) explains that teacher education programs should support teaching practice that develops extraordinary personal and professional skills needed to teach students with a wide range of learning needs. This involves a deep understanding of "a wide array of things about learning, social and cultural context, and teaching and be(ing) able to enact these understandings in complex classrooms serving increasingly diverse students" (p. 302). She adds that teachers need

opportunities to know students over long periods of time and to spend more time working together to develop curriculum, plan lessons, observe and discuss teaching strategies and assess student work in authentic ways. She recommends schools of education to design training programs that enable prospective teachers to practice teaching in authentic school contexts. The PDS is in line with Darling-Hammond's recommendations on teacher education and has produced remarkable results in schools here in the USA and abroad.

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Why did you decide to become a PDS mentor teacher?
2. What have you gained professionally as a result of mentoring in a PDS?
3. Based on your experience, what mentoring strategies are most effective in promoting teacher development?
4. What guidance and support strategies are you finding most helpful in your work as a teacher mentor?
5. What would you suggest be done differently to make mentoring more beneficial to both the mentor teachers and student teachers?

APPENDIX B

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

Section 1: Demographic information

1. Gender : Male_____; Female_____
2. What grade level(s) are you teaching? _____
3. Did you attend a PDS? _____
4. How many years have you been teaching? _____
5. How many years have you been teaching in a PDS? _____
6. How many years have you been a mentor teacher in a PDS? _____
7. Have you ever been a mentor teacher in a non-PDS? _____

Section 2: What are your effective mentoring strategies?
Examine the following statements and on a scale of 1-4, where
1 = Never Tried
2 = Not Effective
3 = Moderately Effective
4 = Very Effective

Please, identify mentoring strategies that have effectively produced mutual benefits for you and student teachers under your supervision.

	1	2	3	4
1.1.Regarded interns as colleagues.				
1.2. Provided assistance only where it is requested by interns.				
1.3.Demonstrated my teaching expertise for interns in a live classroom.				
1.4.Divided the lesson into small manageable units and designated the intern to cover a specified learning task at one of the learning stations.				
1.5.Collaborated with the intern in designing the lesson.				
1.6.Monitored and managed a full lesson to a portion of a class, while the intern did the same for the other portion of the class.				
1.7.Got together with the intern after a collaboratively planned lesson to reflect on our performance and suggest areas of improvement.				
1.8.Encouraged the intern to observe my lesson presentation in order to determine (comment) the effectiveness of the instruction.				
1.9.Invited the intern to suggest alternative forms of instruction.				
1.10. Planned the lesson together with the intern, divided components of the lesson between ourselves,				

and alternated in taking the lead position when teaching the lesson.				
1.11. Discussed the school curriculum with the intern				
1.12. Designated a special working area in my classroom for an intern's workplace.				
1.13. Taken pictures of the intern performing different activities with the students.				
1.14. Written notes of encouragement to my intern.				
1.15. Explained why I choose to do things a certain way.				
1.16. Regarded giving feedback an important part of my mentoring responsibilities.				
1.17. Allowed the intern to make mistakes.				
1.18. Made paraphrasing an important communication tool with the intern.				
1.19. Encouraged the intern to observe in as many classrooms as possible.				
1.20. Provided the intern with observation guiding questions.				
1.21. Assisted the intern to make the connection between university coursework, and the reality of the classroom.				
1.22. Guided the intern in acquiring the content knowledge				
1.23. Tried a new teaching technique at the suggestion of the intern.				
1.24. Complemented the intern for tasks well done.				
1.25. Treated interns as my equals in front of students.				
1.26. Encouraged interns to participate in making decisions about students and classroom matters.				
1.27. Made time to relax and have a good laugh with the interns.				

Section 3:
In what ways does mentoring contribute to your professional development?
On a scale of 1-4, where
1= strongly disagree
2 = disagree
3 = agree
4 = strongly agree

Please respond to the following statements to show your perception of the effect of mentoring on the professional development of practicing teachers.

	1	2	3	4
2.1. I was offered substantial preparation to be a mentor.				
2.2. I still need training to manage mentoring in a PDS.				
2.3. I am more involved in decision making.				
2.4. Mentoring helps me reflect on what I do, and the reason for doing it.				
2.5. I adapt new ways of teaching using new ideas expressed by interns.				
2.6.I do not discern any professional development opportunities resulting from working in a PDS.				
2.7.My teaching repertoire is enriched through reflecting on the work of the intern.				
2.8.I spend more time on lesson planning.				
2.9.I work in a more organized classroom setting.				
2.10. I play an important part in suggesting schedule changes to accommodate mentoring responsibilities.				
2.11. I am more informed about current research on educational issues				
2.12. I receive practice in translating theory into practice.				

Section 4
How helpful are the resources you work with in mentoring teacher candidates?
Examine the following statements, and on a scale of 1 to 4 where
1 = strongly disagree
2 = disagree
3 = agree
4 = strongly agree
Please indicate the level of support and guidance you receive to accomplish your mentoring tasks.

	1	2	3	4
3.1. I reference the PDS handbook to clarify procedures and responsibilities.				
3.2. I have access to the resources I require to fulfill my mentoring responsibilities.				
3.3. The university/site supervisor gives accurate information concerning the PDS.				
3.4. The university/site supervisor gives timely information for managing the PDS affairs.				
3.5. I receive advice from the university faculty when I need it.				

3.6. There are clear guidelines and properly disclosed channels for obtaining help from the university for the PDS program.				
3.7. I receive less than expected help from the university regarding the PDS program.				
3.8. I often seek help from the university faculty/site supervisor.				

APPENDIX C

A VISUAL DIAGRAM OF THE CONCURRENT TRIANGULATION RESEARCH DESIGN

Visual diagram of the Concurrent Triangulation Research Design: the convergence model

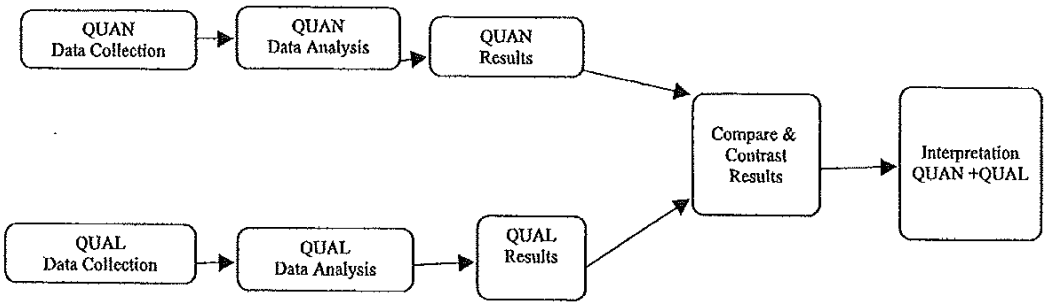


Figure 2: Research Design

Key:
QUAN stands for quantitative study
QUAL stands for qualitative study
The uppercase latters indicate that equal emphasis is placed on both quantitative andqualitative data

Explanation of the design:
Quantitative and qualitative data are collected and analyzed separately. Results from each section are compared and contrasted for similarities and differences, and any other unique characteristics among them. The data from both methods are combined at the interpretation stage. They are converged to generate combined conclusions drawn from the entire study. This creates a better understanding of the research problem

APPENDIX D

THE PDS YEAR-LONG SCHEDULE

Senior year undergraduate experience

Fall Semester_____

15 hrs course work
&
2 Phases – Field Experience
Visit – Middle Level

Spring Semester Student Teaching

Fall	Phase I	First Placement	7 weeks
	Middle School Visit		
	Phase II	Second Placement	7 weeks

Figure 3: PDS Year-long schedule
Reproduced with permission from Twinsdale Professional Development School Handbook, p.5

APPENDIX E

LETTER OF INVITATION TO MENTOR TEACHERS

Dear Teacher,

I am Gertrude Nalumansi, a graduate student at Loyola University. I am pursuing a doctoral degree in education; majoring in the curriculum and instruction program. I invite you to participate in a research study designed to use your help and experience to determine if the mentoring program in your school is beneficial to you and the student teachers you mentor. Your responses in this study may serve as a backdrop for making decisions about the way the mentoring program is managed in your school.

As a participant in this study, you will be asked to describe your experience of the mentoring process in the PDS, and how it relates to the achievement of your professional expectations and the improvement of your teaching practice, and at the same time contributes to the development of the professional skills of new teachers. You will have the opportunity to appraise the resources and/or support you receive in fulfilling your mentoring role, while suggesting ways to improve the mentoring program in your PDS. The research study is scheduled to take place in March 2010.

If you choose to participate in the study, you will be asked to respond to an online survey questionnaire consisting of 54 statements. Answering this survey will take about 25 minutes. If you have been mentoring for two or more years, you may choose to participate in an interview designed to provide more details on the mentoring process at your school. Any information revealed in this study will be held in strict confidence, and will be used exclusively for research purposes. Participation in this study is voluntary, and may be withdrawn at any time, for any reason without consequences.

You are requested to fill out a consent form, enclosed with this letter, to indicate your interest to participate in the study. You may also provide an additional signature to express your interest to participate in the interviews, which will be conducted shortly after administering the survey questionnaire. Please provide contact information, preferably an e-mail address, so that you may be reached to make further arrangements for participating in this study.

Your cooperation to participate in this study is very much appreciated.

Sincerely yours,

Gertrude Nalumansi
Graduate student
Loyola University Chicago
(708) 482-3640

APPENDIX F

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH:

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

Perceptions of Mentor Teachers in a Professional Development School (PDS)

Welcome to the **Perceptions of Mentor Teachers in a Professional Development School** survey. This survey is designed to collect and analyze your views on the experience of mentor teachers in a PDS. This is a research study designed by Gertrude Nalumansi for a *dissertation* under the supervision of Dr. Dorothy Giroux, in the School of Education at Loyola University Chicago. Please read the consent form below to indicate your willingness to participate in the study, before proceeding to the questionnaire section.

You are being asked to participate because you are a mentor teacher in a PDS. You have the experience of supervising pre-service teachers taking part in a student teaching experience in your classroom, with the intention of obtaining elementary school teaching certificates. Your role and experience in the PDS makes you a valuable agent for providing first-hand information on the PDS process, and how it benefits you and the student teachers under your supervision. You are also in position to analyze the kind of help you receive to enable you to fulfill your duties, or the kind of help you would like to receive to be a better teacher mentor.

Purpose:
The purpose of this study is to analyze your perceptions of benefits you obtain from mentoring in a PDS; the effectiveness of the strategies you use to bring about mutual benefits for you and student teachers under your supervision; and the support you receive as a mentor to enable you to perform your mentoring tasks effectively.

Procedures:
If you agree to be in the study, you will be asked to:

- *Answer a survey questionnaire containing statements measuring your perceptions of the effectiveness of mentoring strategies you use to foster mutual professional development for you and the student teachers under your supervision; the benefits you obtain from mentoring in a PDS; and the resources and level of support extended to you to enhance your performance as a mentor teacher.*

Risks/Benefits:
Every effort will be made to ensure that participants in this study are not made vulnerable by what they say. Responses to the survey are anonymous, and not traceable to individual participants. Pseudonyms have been developed for your school, for the university and for individual teachers to be used in reporting the results of this study.

There are no direct benefits to you from participation, but results from this study may be used by program administrators to improve the mentoring program for all participants. Participation may also help you to reflect on your role as a mentor, and lead you to devise different ways of improving your performance.

Confidentiality:

- The information gathered in this study will be held in strict confidence and used for research purposes only. Responses to the survey will be anonymous. Data will be recorded and reported without any personally identifying information, save for the demographic information needed to interpret data meaningfully.
- There are no foreseeable limits to confidentiality in this study. The researcher will be the only individual with access to collected raw data.

Voluntary Participation:

Participation in this study is voluntary. If you do not want to be in this study, you do not have to participate. Even if you decide to participate, you are free not to answer any questions or to withdraw from participation at any time without penalty. Your decision to participate or not to participate in this study will in no way affect your employment.

Contacts and Questions:

If you have questions about this research study, please feel free to contact Gertrude Nalumansi, the student researcher at *babamuto@att.net*, or the faculty sponsor, Dr. Dorothy Giroux at *dgiroux@luc.edu*.
If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Assistant Director of Research Compliance in Loyola's Office of Research Services at (773) 508-2689.

Statement of Consent:

Continuing with this survey implies that you have read the consent statement above, and voluntarily agree to participate in this study. You may click on ***START*** *button below to continue with the study.*

Thank you so much for your cooperation!

APPENDIX G

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THE INTERVIEW PROCESS

Project Title: Perceptions of Mentor Teachers in a PDS: A Mixed-Methods Study.
Researcher: Gertrude Nalumansi
Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Dorothy Giroux

Introduction:
In addition to answering the online survey questionnaire, you are being asked to take part in an interview process in the same research study being conducted by Gertrude Nalumansi for a *dissertation*, under the supervision of Dr. Dorothy Giroux in the School of Education at Loyola University Chicago.

You are being asked to participate in the interview because you have been a mentor teacher in a PDS for one or more years. You have the experience of supervising pre-service teachers taking part in a student teaching experience in your classroom, with the intention of obtaining elementary school teaching certificates. You are in a position to give a detailed interpretation of the mentoring experience, using preferable words, and choice of activities drawn from your practice. Your role and experience in the PDS makes you a valuable agent for providing first-hand information on the PDS process, and how it benefits you and the student teachers under your supervision. You are also in position to analyze the kind of help you receive to enable you to fulfill your duties, or the kind of help you would like to receive to be a better teacher mentor.

Purpose:
The purpose of the interview is to obtain a personal and detailed description of your mentoring experience. The details you provide will help in developing a better analysis and interpretation of your perceptions of benefits you obtain from mentoring in a PDS; the effectiveness of the strategies you use to bring about mutual benefits for you and student teachers under your supervision; and the support you receive as a mentor to enable you to perform your mentoring tasks effectively.

Procedures:
If you agree to participate in the interview process, you will be asked to:

- *Give a detailed explanation of your perceptions of benefits to mentor teachers in a PDS; mentoring strategies that promote simultaneous development for mentors and mentees; and resources and level of support for mentors in a PDS. The interview consists of five semi-structured questions that may take 40 minutes to an hour to answer. The interviews will be audio-taped. You will be able to choose the time and venue for conducting the interview. Interviews will have to be conducted outside school working hours.*

Risks/Benefits:
Every effort will be made to ensure that the data are recorded and reported without any personally identifying information. Pseudonyms for the school and for individual teachers will be used in recording, storing and reporting the results of interviews to protect the identity of individual participants.

There are no direct benefits to you from participation, but results from this study may be used by program administrators to improve the mentoring program for all participants. Participation may also help you to reflect on your role as a mentor, and lead you to devise different ways of improving your performance.

Confidentiality:

- The information gathered in this study will be held in strict confidence and used for research purposes only. Data will be recorded and reported without any personally identifying information. Recorded tapes will bear no names but codes representing different participants, and demographic information needed to interpret data meaningfully.
- There are no foreseeable limits to confidentiality in this study. The researcher will be the only individual to access records of collected data, and to assign pseudonyms accordingly.
- The audio tapes recorded during this study will be labeled using pseudonyms, with the code breaker stored separately from the tapes. The audio tapes will be stored under lock and key, at the researcher's place of residence, and be accessible to the researcher only, for research purposes. The tapes will be erased at the conclusion of the research project.

Voluntary Participation:

Participation in this study is voluntary. If you do not want to be in this study, you do not have to participate. Even if you decide to participate, you are free not to answer any question or to withdraw from participation at any time without penalty. Your decision to participate or not to participate in this study will in no way affect your employment.

Contacts and Questions:

If you have questions about this research study, please feel free to contact Gertrude Nalumansi, the student researcher at *babamuto@att.net*, or the faculty sponsor, Dr. Dorothy Giroux at *dgiroux@luc.edu*.

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Assistant Director for Research Compliance in Loyola's Office of Research Services at (773) 508-2689.

Statement of Consent:

Your signature below indicates that you have read and understood the information provided above, have had an opportunity to ask questions, and agree to participate in the interview process. You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

_____

Participant's Printed Name

_____ _____

Participant's Signature Date

_____ _____

Researcher's Signature Date

NB: Please return signed or unsigned consent forms to the researcher in the enclosed, stamped envelope. Thank you.

APPENDIX H

REQUEST TO CARRY OUT A RESEARCH STUDY AT THE PDS SITE

To the School Principal,

Dear School Principal,

I am a graduate student at Loyola University, working on completing a doctoral degree in Curriculum and Instruction, under the direction of Dr. Dorothy Giroux. I am planning to conduct a research study, on mentor teachers in the professional development school, to help highlight a crucial role teachers may play in promoting their own professional development and the professional development of pre-service teachers. This study will rely on teachers' mentoring experiences and their interpretation of these experiences to analyze teachers' perceptions of the benefits from the mentoring program, effectiveness of their mentoring strategies, and level of support and guidance they receive in the PDS mentoring program. I request your permission to conduct this study in your school, with teachers who participate in mentoring pre-service teachers in the PDS program.

The study is planned to take place in May 2010. The teachers who volunteer to participate will be required to respond to an online survey questionnaire consisting of 54 questions, and six teachers will be selected to participate in an interview consisting of five questions. I have enclosed copies of the survey questionnaire and interview questions for your inspection.

Should you grant your permission, you are hereby assured that great care will be taken to ensure that conducting this study will not cause undue disruption in the daily management of school affairs. Answering the survey questionnaire is likely to take 25 to 30 minutes, while each interview is likely to take up to an hour. Teachers will be given ample time to complete the online survey questionnaire outside working hours. The interviews will be scheduled to take place before or after school, at an agreed upon time and place with the individual participants.

If you have any questions regarding this research project, please reach me at:
Telephone: (708) 482-3640
E-Mail: babamuto@att.net

Dr. Dorothy Giroux, the faculty sponsor for this research work is also available to answer any questions. She can be reached at the office phone (773 508-8338) or by e-mail at dgiroux@lud.edu

Sincerely yours,

Gertrude Nalumansi
Graduate student
Loyola University Chicago

APPENDIX I

REQUEST FOR A CONDITIONAL APPROVAL

IRB Committee
Loyola University Chicago

To the IRB Committee

Re: Request for a Conditional Approval

I hereby request for a conditional approval to conduct a proposed dissertation study entitled *Perceptions of Mentor Teachers in a Professional Development School: A Mixed-Methods Study.* I am planning to conduct this study in a Chicago Public School (CPS) with mentor teachers who supervise student teachers in a professional development school environment.

I need the conditional approval to obtain permission from the CPS Office of Research to conduct this study in a public school. As a matter of policy, CPS Office of Research will not review my proposal without IRB approval from my institution.

Presently, I have obtained tentative permission from the principal at the proposed site of study. However, I am not able to use this permission because it must be validated by the approval of the CPS Office of Research.

Any assistance rendered to obtain the necessary permission to conduct the proposed study will be highly appreciated.

Sincerely yours,

Gertrude Nalumansi

APPENDIX J

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION FORM

The participant information form will be used to collect data from potential participants, when the researcher makes contact in person with them. The researcher will arrange to make individual contact visits with potential participants to establish connection with them and get familiar with the environment, in which they live and work. On these visits, the researcher will explain the nature of the interview study, determine the level of interest of individual potential participants, initiate the consent process and obtain contact information that will be used to complete interviews with the selected participants (Seidman, 1998). Below is an example of a participant information form, developed using guidelines by Seidman that will be used to collect additional information from potential participants.

Participant Information Form

Participant's Work address _____
Telephone number _____
E-mail address _____
Preferable means of communication _____
Best time to get in touch with you _____
Time to avoid calling you_____
Availability for meetings for the next two or three months _____
Preferable places to meet _____

APPENDIX K

FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Request for Additional Information

After going through our previous interview, I found that I need additional information on some of the important points you raised. Consequently, I have developed the questions below as guidelines for providing the needed information. Please review the questions, and provide the additional information if you wish to do so.

Please note that you are under no obligation to answer these questions. Your decision to answer these questions is voluntary, and may be withdrawn at any time, for any reason without consequences. Any information you submit in response to these questions will be held in strict confidence, and used exclusively for research purposes.

Your cooperation in this matter is highly appreciated.

Follow-up interview questions for Ms. MP

In our previous interview-

1. You mentioned that you were assigned mentoring duties very early on in your teaching career.
    a) How did you handle that first year of mentoring?
    b) In what ways has mentoring student teachers in the PDS, for all these years, impacted your teaching experience?
2. You explained that mentoring student teachers very early on in your teaching career made you get rid of the “cute lessons”.
    a) In what ways does a well planned lesson differ from a “cute lesson”?

b) How do you help student teachers to become aware of the “cute lesson syndrome”?

3. You stated that you want interns under your supervision to start working with children right away, rather than to observe you teaching.

   What tasks do you consider important for student teachers to perform? In other words, what is on your list of “must do tasks for interns”, if you have such a list?

4. You pointed out that, there is a difference between a novice teacher and someone who should really never be a teacher. What is this difference?

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VITA

Gertrude Nalumansi was born in Uganda, Africa. She is the daughter of Edward and Magdalene Ssenoga of Kambaala Village, in Mityana District, in the South Western part of Uganda. She was born and grew up in Uganda with nine brothers and four sisters. She came to the USA in 1996, and has been residing in Illinois since then.

Gertrude completed elementary, secondary, and undergraduate education in Uganda. She graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Education from Makerere University Kampala, in 1990. She taught in Betania Vocational Secondary school for a year after graduation; and in Mount St. Mary's Namagunga Girls' Secondary School for more than four years.

She came to the USA in 1996 and has been residing in Illinois for the last 14 years. She has since then earned a Master of Arts degree in Education from Concordia University River Forest.

Gertrude plans to use her degree in education to influence teacher education in Uganda. She is confident that the knowledge and skills acquired in the fields of curriculum and educational research will be useful and relevant to impact the professional development of other teachers.

DISSERTATION COMMITTEE

The Dissertation submitted by Gertrude Nalumansi has been read and approved by the following committee:

Dorothy Giroux, Ph.D., Director
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